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**the kankakee**

**river**

**of**

**history**

**by marion isaacs**

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY



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Mr. Isaacs has been active in research of historical places and events in Porter County since 1942. He is currently Vice-President of the Porter County Historical Society and Chairman of the Porter County Historical Society Museum. The events and places described in this book have been compiled with great care for their authenticity.

Best Wishes  
Marion Isaacs

# FORWARD

There is no possibility of writing an indisputable history of the Kankakee River. Every settlement, city, and town within hailing distance of this so-called "River of History" has its own prideful version of the spectacular events that make up its history.

From the days of the creeping glaciers plowing the great furrow which became the Kankakee River, to the days of the straightened river, there has been only one thing about which all the settlers and settlements agree. That is: "If it isn't our version, it's wrong."

From the bibliography of books, articles of about 20 years ago and older listed in the back of this book, this writer has obtained most of his material. There may be repetitious paragraphs, with only slight variations, but they have been included to present a broader picture.

This history presents the generally accepted versions of the various "Tales of a Vanishing River", including locations, names, and periods. There is no insistence, however, that they are right — only that they have been told and retold for well over a hundred years in some cases, and are a part of at least the legendary history of the famous old river.

Hospitality may have been abused, and local pride ignored in some cases, but that is inevitable in an area where even the first explorers, the first missionaries, and the first settlers didn't agree. One thing is very true: a cat is supposed to have nine lives. Nine lives would hardly have been sufficient if these historical characters journeyed, lived, and died in as many places as local folk-lore insists.

The Author.

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# INTRODUCTION

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No one knows when human beings first occupied the Kankakee Valley. Excavations have brought to light the bones of strange animals, but whatever bones of humankind have been unearthed, are dated within the past two hundred years.

In the days when practically all distant travel was by canoe, there was undoubtedly a connection between the end of Lake Michigan and the Kankakee River. There was a time when the lake was about six feet higher than now, and a period when Lake Superior flowed into and out of Lake Michigan. There was probably a period when some prehistoric form of mankind traveled over this route. If the theory of the researchers is true, there were copper miners from the Maya ancient country of Yucatan who journeyed from the Gulf of Mexico up the Mississippi to mine copper in the Lake Superior region ten thousand years ago.

The Kankakee river towns of early times were the usual lawless, brutal settlements of a wild west frontier. As recent as 140 years ago, this was considered the "Wild and Wooly West".

Cut-throats, horse thieves, counterfeiters, and highwaymen were here then. Most of them left weird — and probably true — tales behind them.

During the Civil War, some of these isolated river towns and islands hid many deserters from the army — in fact, two or three of the former islands once bore the name "Deserters' Island".

There were also a goodly number of "mysterious characters" who were judiciously unmolested. They had plenty of money, wore heavy but well made clothes, lived in the better type of river cabins, viewed every new arrival with suspicion. They gambled frequently in the wide-open river saloons, lost or won with considerable indifference, drank conservatively and lived quietly. They were called "absconders" behind their backs, but may have been big scale bank robbers, embezzlers, or even "departed" bank presidents. Eventually, some of these wealthy strangers, who from some hidden cache periodically brought forth a hatful of gold coins, became "respected citizens" and even took an active part in the subsequent development of this frontier. Many a "fabricated" family past and background became a part of their Back East existence—but it didn't do to inquire too closely into the details of their past. Curious people were sometimes found dead on the highway.

There was once a very, very old "French Village" which was started by deserting "engagees and courier du Bois" from New France. They took unto themselves Indian maidens for wives, and in time became strongly Catholic — as did their numerous progeny. They even imported Cures from New France.

Later, these Catholics, led by their priest, rebelled against the dictates of Rome. For a time, there were religious wars, mysterious deaths, fires,

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and disappearances. Later, the difficulties were somehow smoothed over and the descendants of these same rebellious "engagees", in a palliative gesture, built the famous Kankakee Valley Church of St. Anne.

A village of the same name grew up around the church. From Rome came a Sacred Relic—a finger-bone from the grave of St. Anne. The church became famous as a shrine and was called the "Lourdes of America". Many miracles of healing have been recorded in that church.

Steamboating on the Kankakee forms a distinctive part of the river's history. The Illinois town of Kankakee is the largest city in the entire valley and is the location of several Chicago industries.

There are summer resorts, one vast State Park, and many beautiful homes where Indian villages once flourished along the river.

The valley is one of the country's greatest onion growing sections. At one time it had a locally financed broad gauge railroad from mid Jasper county to Dinwiddie hauling garden produce and onions to Chicago. It was called "The Onion Line". When the promoter died, the Monon System bought and junked it—they were certainly not inclined to let a competing line operate.

Some of the greatest land frauds in history were perpetrated by Indiana politicians, including both local and state officials, during the state's first effort to drain the Kankakee Swamps.

During the excessive demand for timber following the Chicago fire, timber thieves invaded the hidden marshes and began the ruthless cutting of foreign-owned timber. Vigilance committees finally took care of this element.

Today, the Kankakee River has an ancient Indian portage at one end and the Dresden Atomic Power Plant at the other. Between these two points, it has a thousand strange tales.

## CHAPTER I

Early day explorers from Quebec humorously said the Kankakee River was as wide as it was long. It appeared on the first maps as Thekiki Huakiki, Seignelay, and several other names. Finally, the cartographers agreed and adopted the name Kankakee.

It rises from the springs and swampland area of Northwestern Indiana about three or four miles southwest of the southernmost bend of the St. Joseph River where the city of South Bend is now located. The exact point of origin is unknown as it varies somewhat with the seasons. Perhaps the village of Crumstown is the nearest settlement to the spring-fed marshes that indicates the beginning of the river.

Called "The River of History" by some historians, it was the connecting link of a possible canoe route from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico. It was probably used as a canoe waterway well over a thousand years ago. Along its banks, especially in the south end of Porter County, Indiana, there were many Indian mounds. During the straightening of the river and the draining of its swamps, bones of ancient animals were also uncovered. Mastodon, sabretoothed tiger, giant beaver, and a type of giant elk seemed to predominate among the animals of the post glacial period dug up by the excavating machinery.

The river flows across part of Indiana and part of Illinois, emptying into the Des Plaines River at or near Dresden, where the state's first Atomic Power plant is located. This region has seen the evolution from Medicine Men to Missile Men. At its best, in all its original twisting and turning, it was hardly 200 miles long. Today, its length, after being confined in long straight machine-made banks, is about 120 miles.

Across the northern end of Indiana, at the foot of Lake Michigan, there was apparently once a shallow waterway from Lake Michigan to the Kankakee. For uncounted ages, the Indians came to the end of the lake, and paddled their canoes down the wide-spread Kankakee, to the Mississippi by way of the Des Plaines and the Illinois rivers. However, in the course of time, this waterway became only a portage-marked crossing. The Indians had found it easier to turn from Lake Michigan into the St. Joseph River and follow it down to the beginning of the Kankakee. This gave them a portage of only three or four miles, instead of a series of portages across Portage Township, in Porter County, Indiana, which amounted to a total of over twelve miles.

The Kankakee River has always been a sluggish moving stream, spreading out over the low lands to a width of several miles. Within that vast expanse of water there were hundreds of so-called "islands" which were small, tree-covered rises in the low-lands from one to six or more acres in extent. One was called "The Great Island". It was comprised of 200 or 300 acres and located towards Crumstown. During some seasons, it was a part of the mainland, but for 90 per cent of the time it was indeed an island

and reached only by boat.

Almost all the islands were occupied by trappers' cabins, or by men who for some reason wanted to live in isolation. There were many criminals hiding out in the Kankakee swamps on some of these islands and early-day court records show many a futile attempt to apprehend them. They had secret routes across the river and moved from one county to another as officials attempted to close in on them.

In the area comprising the northern end of Jasper County and the southern end of Porter County a vigilante group called the "Jasper Rangers" was eventually organized. Without regard to county lines or legal procedures, this group executed the most vicious of the Kankakee criminals on sight.

After the Civil War, the Kankakee region became known as a Sportsmen's paradise. Celebrities from all across the nation—and sometimes from foreign countries—came to hunt water-fowl during the migration seasons. The river was the fly-way for sky-darkening flocks of birds twice a year. Many of these sportsmen organized "Hunting Clubs" and built rather pretentious "club houses"—a few of which still exist as residences or as riverside boarding houses for fishermen.

Trappers who had cabins on the islands of the Kankakee had the area divided into "rights". For the most part, these imaginary lines were observed; although, occasionally a newcomer came into the region, determined to trap where he saw fit. The "Old Timers" ganged up on these new arrivals, seeing to it that their traps were 'lost' and their cabins mysteriously caught fire. Old records show that hayracks passed through the various river towns from time to time loaded to capacity with hides. The estimated amount of money realized by Kankakee trappers, until the draining of the marshlands, was almost three million dollars.

The Kankakee River first appeared in Jesuit history in 1666. In 1679, Father Hennepin, a Belgian priest, acting as clerk and recorder for the La Salle Expedition, wrote as follows:

It was December 3, 1679, when we set out with eight canoes. We had 30 men mostly "engagees" of Montreal. We came down the Lake Michigan from a place called Green Bay and went to the mouth of the St. Joseph River. For over 25 leagues our course was southeast up this river, seeking the portage to the beginning of the Kankakee River. Part of the way Sieur de La Salle had gone on afoot.

After going further up the river seeking the Seignelay — which included the Kankakee and the Des Plains and the Illinois — we found no sign of the turn-off leading to that river, so we stopped to wait for La Salle to return.

When he did not come back, we failed to know what to do. I asked two of our engagees to go into the woods and fire their guns so La Salle would hear them and thus know about where we waited. Two other men walked well up the St. Joseph—called by Hennepin, "The

Miami" — but it was useless as it was soon dark, so they came back to the camp fire.

Early next morning I took two paddlers and — having emptied one of our dugouts — we went on up the river well beyond the elbow, but we did not succeed in locating him.

Our day was one of great alarm and uncertainty, although Henri Tonti—he of the artificial iron hand—insisted that La Salle would find his way back. It was well on to four o'clock in the afternoon and again getting dark when we saw him approaching from the distance. As he drew near we saw his face and hands were black from tending a camp fire during the cold night. Hanging around his waist were two small animals about the size of muskrats. He explained that they had not tried to run away, but had seemingly feigned death. They had first been seen hanging to the tree nearby, by their tails. He killed both with a club. They were very fat, and we cooked them for supper, and the canoe men feasted on them.

La Salle told us he had gone far out of his way because of swamps, and had gotten into a deep snow-fall which delayed him getting back to the river he was trying to follow. He said he had fired his gun twice to signal us. Because of his delay he thought our party had gone on up the river, so he continued that way. During the night he found a burning camp fire. He approached, making much noise, and called to the man assumed to be there, but whoever it was, was afraid and ran away.

La Salle took possession of the fire and the all ready prepared grass bed and remained there all night.. Next morning he concluded that we had not passed, and that he had gone too far, so he returned.

Father Gabriel — and I also — begged La Salle not to do this again, as the success of the whole expedition depended upon him. One of our Indians who had been out hunting came to our camp and said we had gone too far, and must go back to the elbow of the St. Joseph River, which the party did, all except La Salle and me. La Salle was naturally very tired, so we rested in our little camp. It snowed much of the time, and the hastily woven mat used for a door to the "cabin" of rush-mat walls of our temporary shelter, caught fire from the blowing flames that the wind blew against it—and only my discovery of the fire —and my quick pulling down of the door saved our lives.

The next day we joined the men at the portage. Father Gabriel had blazed the trees to show us the way. We found some horns and bones where the Indians had made hides to carry their meat away. This place was near an Indian village on the edge of a great plain. The Kankakee River rises within this plain in a great swamp. It is about a league and a half from the St. Joseph River bend. Our men had carried all their outfits across this portage. The Kankakee River is navigable for dugouts within a hundred paces from its source.

This river widens so rapidly that within a short distance it has

become as wide as the Marne. Its course is through vast swamps where in spite of its fairly strong current it broadens out greatly, and after paddling a whole day down its surface, we sometimes found we had actually traveled only two leagues in a straight line. As far as we can see, there is only water covered marshlands on each side, bordered with rushes and alders. Maybe for 40 leagues we might not have found any dry ground on which to camp, except for a number of frozen mounds on which we built fires and lay down on the frozen ground. Our food began to be short after two or three days on the Kankakee, as we did not find the game we hoped for.

The next region we entered was a great open plain on which nothing grows besides high grasses. Here the Indians had burned it over in their hunting, and all we were able to secure was one lean stag, a small doe, some swans, and two geese. With work hard and food not plentiful, our French engagees would surely have deserted and would have gone to join the Indians, if opportunity offered. We finally arrived at an Illini Indian village 120 leagues from Lake Michigan the last day of December.

## CHAPTER II

When the Kankakee lands are dry in the fall, fire was always a source of danger. The Indians usually figured the prevailing winds, and sometimes backfired at their villages, when they hunted by using great fire rings. Charles Bartlett, whose father was a small town merchant along the upper reaches of the Kankakee, told of a fire in 1835. The tale was told to him by the local doctor, an aged herbalist of the village:

That green pool of water over there, said the doctor, was dry land in 1835. It was covered with grass and was solid enough to walk on. That fall I came to this area with Black Feather, a local Indian boy, to gather herbs, and to call on a neighboring half-breed named Old Poco who collected ginseng for me. While I was engaged in gathering a supply of Calcus roots, I sent Black Feather, with the canoe, down to Poco's place to get ginseng. As he paddled the canoe out of sight, I saw a cloud of churning white and black smoke far off on the horizon. It seemed a long way off, but I began to worry about the boy. I climbed a tree and saw that there was indeed danger for both of us. I waited an hour and the boy did not return, and I began to feel that maybe he had been cut off by the fire. I was alone in a vast sea of dry grass.

I came down the tree in a hurry and began to seek logs of some kind from which I could make a sort of raft, and paddle myself to safety down the Kankakee. It was while thus engaged I observed the tree-tops begin to bend and sway in a powerful wind. In a moment the air was filled with whirring wings as birds with affrighted cries came over me in wild flight.

Only a few miles away were black clouds of twisting smoke and at their lower edge was a long glowing line of red. The wind was rising into a gale and was coming somewhat in my direction. Larger birds came wildly by. They seemed tired and sought a safe place to rest a moment, but as a smell of smoke came into the region they again took to the air — thousands of them.

I immediately knew there was no time for me to build a raft. There was only one thing for me to do — a thing we had long ago realized. A cave was the only salvation. A low and deep cave was located on the side from which the fire was approaching, but it had to be on the river bank. Just low enough that it did not fill with water. My mattock and the soft earth served me well. I soon had a trench running back from the river. I quickly covered it with twigs and branches, and using my canvas bag as a bucket, I plastered a thick layer of mud all over the top. After having secured a partial shelter, I went back into the end of the cave and built up an outer wall at the entrance. As I worked a dead bird fell at the entrance and within sight there were burned birds dropping dead. I took my herb bag and

cut eye-holes and a small breathing space for my nose, and soaked it again in the water at my feet. I had brought into the cave my coat, my cooking kettle, my mattock and my ball of twine. As far as I could tell, I had done everything I could, and so awaited the spreading flames.

After doing a little more digging at an angle I happened to glance out. There were two foxes standing before my cave, looking in. Across the river were three wolves sitting on their haunches. Up the river a few feet I also saw two racoons close to the river. This slight clearing and the water seemed to be the spot of safety the animals were selecting. From some place afar there came the blood-curdling cry of a trapped animal of some kind. It was so distorted by pain and fear that I could not recognize it.

Suddenly the atmosphere was like the breath of a volcano. Great tongues of flame shot through the forest, there was a crackling of flames and surging of smoky billows; and the fire divided at the river's bend, surged around the bank, and joined again just beyond my cave. I became unconscious. Some time later I recovered, realizing the fire had passed and it was raining.

The three wolves were still crouched across the river — dead. The foxes were but crumpled bodies, and the two racoons were lying tipped over, like stuffed toys. There were many birds and small animals lying in the blackened stubble.

My eyes were in bad shape, my body was covered with small burns, and my feet were blistered. Thus it was that Old Poco found me. His place was without grass and without much that was burnable. As a result, he had not suffered from the fire. He took me to his home where the whole family ministered to me for two weeks — for I had suffered much from the flame.

Black Feather had probably been conscience-stricken by leaving me, or by not coming back to warn me when he had discovered the magnitude of the conflagration. In any event, I did not see him again. Although through Poco, I knew that he had got beyond the fire, and I rather hoped some day to reassure him. I never thought for a moment that he had been guilty of any neglect.

## CHAPTER III

In another story told by Bartlett in his book entitled "Tales of Kankakeeland", published in 1904, he told of the lost singer of Great Island. Its title was 'The Pitiful Quest'.

In 1850 the regions of the Kankakee were becoming well known in certain sections of the East, and prospective buyers were coming out to buy up homesites along the river. It was not unusual for New Yorkers to alight from the stage, and once in a while one came for a long stay.

The Great Island was a favorite place of residence. It was an enchanting place, much like a park, for each year the dry grasses were burned off, and each year a new green carpet was spread across its two or three hundred acres. Fallen branches were consumed, dry leaves and withered grass burned, and many of the low tree-branches were trimmed off by the annual fire. To us of the upper Kankakee, it afforded a scene of sylvan glory such as one could find in no other place beneath the sky.

The first of the New Yorkers who adopted this land as a summer home was a young man who came alone in the spring of 1852. His name became almost a household word in the village. His face, his form and black horse were familiar to all the townspeople, for he remained here all one summer.

If nothing else made this young man conspicuous in the life of the village, he was known and is still remembered for his wonderful baritone voice. He attended our local church, and was the unofficial leader of all the hymns. He sometimes visited the village school at singing time and joined with the children in their songs. But the richness and power of his voice was best known for its ringing outdoor melodies as he walked or rode over the paths in Great Island. Such was the simplicity and freedom of our quiet neighborhood that those who could sing never hesitated to do so in the open air.

This young man who rode along our highways and sang his way into the hearts of our people, frequently talked about buying a tract in Great Island, and making his all-year home among us. We knew he had the means—and the land was for sale, but he never made a deal—apparently he was waiting for consent of someone back home, but for some unexplained reason that consent was withheld.

Whatever the reason, it was with a sad and downcast heart that one morning he stopped at the livery to pet the friendly black horse he had frequently hired. Then he told the landlord at the tavern to send his various bags on the stage when it came along. He said he would walk ahead some two or three hours, first going through Great Island for a final look, and then along the road, to be picked up by the oncoming stage.

Later the stage driver was enjoined to be on the lookout for the walking passenger—nor did he fail in his duty. He even stopped the coach several times at the proper places and called—sounding his sonorous horn. But the driver and his passengers listened in vain for any response.

The stage dropped the man's baggage off at the next station, where it lay unclaimed so long that its owner's disappearance began to be talked about. In time some of his friends made a search through all the ravines, all the clumps, all the nets of wild grape vines, and all the tangled crops in the fields.

There were many French half breeds and Indians living along the upper Kankakee during that time, and some of them fell under suspicion, but nothing came of it. When the officials opened the baggage they were further mystified for — although nothing had seemingly been disturbed — there were no papers, no money, no letters, no written or printed word in either traveling chest or carpetbag.

The man was never seen nor heard of again. His father came and conducted a vigorous search with no results. He went back broken hearted. For a year or two we discussed the case—and then abruptly the father came back. The passing of two years had aged him almost beyond belief, but he was able to get a horse and ride off across the ford to Great Island, which he did almost daily. Sometimes in the very early morning, he was seen walking down the road over which the stage traveled. There seemed to be a new hope in his eyes, but it was seen that he leaned heavily on his cane. He came back tired and weary each evening, after either riding or walking. To those who kindly offered sympathy, he replied almost cheerily, 'We'll soon know the truth!'

The long and frequent searches of the river and the total absence of any new evidence created a feeling that perhaps the kindly and sorrowing old man was experiencing some slight lapse in his mental powers. But his gentleness and serenity of spirit, as well as his lively hope, won the kindly interest of all.

By and by he began to fail visibly, and sometimes he was unable to leave his room. We learned his family address and were prepared to send a message to his relatives if he grew much worse.

One day, however, he began to rally, and after a brief time, he was again out on the street. It was the first of our most delightful cool November days that enabled him to again venture into the area along the stage route. One evening he did not return, so a few friends went out to find him. He was seated on a bluff looking up the river, listening. He was evidently excited in mind, yet calm in demeanor and deliberate in speech. He began to tell of a strange experience but stopped as a soft song came through the trees. No one could discern from whence it came, and no one could affirm or deny it was a human voice.

Some thought it was like the distant notes of pealing bells, others were reminded of the low soft notes of a flute, and there was a note here and there that reminded the listeners of the soft baritone of this man's son. They all had an irresistible feeling that it might be a spiritualized form of those melodious tones so often heard through the woods. Only once did the voice come on this particular evening. The aged father apologized for the need of the townspeople coming to find him. He explained that he had wandered too far, and had sat down on this bluff, and was entranced by the voice that came to him soon after.

The little group walked home in silence. None of them thereafter was able to determine beyond pre-adventure whether or not he had listened to a salutation from the spirit world.

One night some time after this strange event we were returning home from a visit to one of the old Indian fields near the St. Joseph River when a prolonged and rapturous peal of melody assailed our ears from a point not far removed from the Kankakee River path. It was moonlight in early November at just such a time and condition as had existed when the citizens and the aged father heard that beautiful melody. The Indians said this was the last of the birds to wing its way southward from the great Kankakee swamps, and that this was its annual requiem of summer melodies. We called it the Hermit Thrush.

And so it is a matter of little surprise that a father mourning for a son should have once listened to that bird in wonder and in amazement.

As the aged man approached the end, our little community felt more and more solicitous for his welfare. The tale of his sorrow and especially this new experience was indeed known to all. But there had been something in his character and conduct that had in a particular manner drawn the attention of little children, who would often go a little way with him as he went into the woods on his never ending search. Frequently, they brought him a bunch of wild-flowers, gathered along the Kankakee banks, or, in season, a glorious bunch of the famed white grapes that the 'Last of the Mohicans' brought from Narragansett Bay when a few survivors of that race fled to these hidden swamps many, many years ago.

Finally he passed away, repeating in his last breath — with an expression of hope — "I shall soon know the truth". He, by his own choice, was interred in our local cemetery. None of his few remaining relatives came in response to our message — they were all much too advanced in years.

In the Tale of Kankakee land this one has been handed down from generation to generation. Never is the Hermit Thrush heard in November as it departs but that someone again tells the story of 'The Pitiful Quest'.

## CHAPTER IV

"If one should go down to the site of the old Indian village on the Pottawattomie Trail," said Charles H. Bartlett, "he could readily find the spot where in ancient days the canoes were drawn up on the bank. The place is at the margin of an open sheet of water leading down to the Kankakee in the midst of a broad marshland. And were it now possible for a person to take one of those canoes and follow the current of the river only a little way, he would arrive at a locality where for a distance of some rods, a wall of bullrushes several feet in height replaces the tufted bank of the Kankakee."

In the region covered by these rushes, and by several additional walls of rushes standing behind them, lies Lost Lake.

In the early days this little adjacent stream was called the Barkowsky. Now, however, it is a straightened channel but quite deep. They have taken out all the sinuous curves and loops by which this ancient water crept from its source. As it led from Lost Lake to the Kankakee, this rush-wall stream was a secret passageway for the Pottawatomies. No passerby could discover this lake unless by accident as he was searching for a fallen duck or goose, or was paddling a dugout into the rushes to let an approaching canoe full of strange Indians go silently by.

Scientist say that in glacial times a small spearlike iceberg probably got stranded there, leaving this deep, almost round well-like lake, as it twisted, turned, and ground its way into the depths before it melted.

The Indian women went to this great wall of rushes almost daily during the fall to gather the great tall growths for their wigwams — for floor mats and sometimes for walls. They were always careful about disturbing the protecting shelter of the lake by taking the reeds from inconspicuous places. The Barkowsky was the entrance to their safety, their asylum, their hide-out. For the continual tribal conflicts between different groups convinced them that from time to time enemies would come to attack the Pottawatomies.

No matter how many the ranks of the enemy, this avenue would be a secret. If the attacking party numbered only a few, they would seek to strike a sudden blow and then escape by running away. If there were many of them, they would approach with great caution, so that their victims could not get away. For a large party to approach unobserved was impossible, so they came in small parties professing friendship, and passing on—only to turn back after a day or two and join other groups for a concerted attack.

This was the Iroquois nation that made these brutal attacks. They came from a great distance and stole women and children—and murdered the men. The Indians living along the Kankakee had a signal system and a guard system, and were well organized. Signal fires—flames at night and smoke by day—warned all the tribe. The women and children and the old folks hurried into the stream and swam to the hidden lake by way of

the Barkowsky. Nor could any swift-darting pickerel thread the mazes of that devious way with easier grace than that of the girls and women of the Kankakee tribe. They always swam into the tract where it was evident that the mat makers had been cutting rushes. Never did they enter the hidden waterway in a place where a broken weed or a bent rush would mark their passage. A rush-cutting site was always apparent — always evident — and always ignored by the oncoming enemy. There were thousands of them all along the river.

The secret of Lost Lake was never betrayed by the Pottawattomies. But once there was a discovery — and by the hated Iroquois.

It took place just after a fall hunting party of the Pottawattomies had left the village, and just before a similar party, then due to be back, had not returned. With the exception of a few boys and old men, the whole village was left without protection. A small group of Iroquois arrived —and after a casual visit departed up the river. But a signal came from a guard. Other enemies were within the area. At a given signal the women and children slipped into the water and swam silently to the Barkowsky. The first woman to enter the hidden lake waters found herself clutched by an Iroquois who held a great war club. A whole fleet of Iroquois canoes, each with one or two warriors, had somehow found the hiding place and were waiting there. One by one the unwarned women swam into the lake and were captured. Without an attack, without a battle, without a bit of resistance, the Iroquois had captured all the women and children of the village. They rushed them overland toward a rendezvous up the river or took them in their canoes. The idea was to get all the captives far beyond the possibility of recapture before the absent Pottawattomies returned.

It was in the earliest light of the next dawn that the delayed party of hunters came back with their heavy loads. They found only one little shivering boy, who had somehow been overlooked, to tell the tale.

The campaign was already agreed upon — it had several times been discussed. Across the several bends in the Kankakee the Pottawattomies sped. They knew the crooked path and the crooked river would take considerable time for the Iroquois to reach. For them there was no other way. All must go toward the portage and then get to the St. Joseph River at the bend.

Regardless of the fact that the enemy and their captives had several hours start, the avengers were confident they could be intercepted at the Last Defile. These Pottawattomies were familiar with the short cut and had less than ten miles to go.

The Iroquois had 20 miles to go, either by the twisting riverside trail or on the bending, turning surface of the Kankakee. Then they had a portage to make and a few more miles to cover on the St. Joseph until they passed the Southern Dip, a few miles south of the present University of Notre Dame.

It was at this defile, this canyon, at the lower end of the Southern Dip that the Pottawattomies arrived and waited.

Concealed in dead silence on either side of the defile, they waited. Waiting in determined rejoicing, there could be only one outcome of the meeting. My father told of the Indian story-teller in the firelight who never failed to dwell on this situation with all the possible ecstasy of Indian glee. By strange and peculiar modulation of tone, by mobility of features, by flashing eyes and contortions of body, by hands that drew the bow, and by downward turned palms that indicated the stealth of the avengers, the story was told and depicted.

Now the Iroquois were coming through the tall grass, crowded in close array or were coming into the defile with their canoes. Here was a narrow cleft. It was the site of a ford where those afoot must brave the cold water and cross — and here was the 'narrows' where only one canoe at a time could enter. Not until the women had been herded across did the Pottawattomies attack. There was no turning back by the Iroquois, for behind them were the "closing in" avengers. On the opposite bank the Pottawattomie women, now turned into the fiercest of antagonists, grabbed the Iroquois weapons as each captor fell with a death-dealing arrow and helped in the extermination of the whole Iroquois band. The story tellers seem agreed on one thing — there were less than a dozen of the enemy that escaped — of a band that had probably once constituted thirty-five.

It is said that in more modern times, Lost Lake was the home of a trapper; and still later, it was a location for a band of counterfeiters — and once it was the hiding place on the 'underground railway' that harbored Negro slaves as they were aided in the journey to Canada.

## CHAPTER V

One of the best writers of the Kankakee River, Charles H. Bartlett, formerly president of the Northern Indiana Historical Society, has said,

"The region called Kankakee Land consists of over a million acres of swaying reeds and trembling bogs. The area is far greater than the great Dismal Swamps of Virginia and North Carolina. Some of its many islands and some of its higher prairies were undoubtedly the home of an old civilization. Even now (1904) we can find crabapples planted in precise rows, plums in compact groves and grapes in areas that indicate they were once well tended vineyards — and there are shade trees in geometrical arrangements certainly so arranged by the hand of man. Trees recently felled in the area indicate that the old civilization was two hundred years ago."

These sites, marking a number of ancient homesteads, were called "Indian Gardens" by the settlers, but authorities doubt that they were established by any type of Indian. The best assumption is that France, in the early part of 1700, sent a number of families here from Quebec or Montreal to colonize the region. Of course, in the matter of one type of large white grapes, the origin is accredited to Indians from Naragansett — for there — and there only — this type of grape is known.

The upper part of the Kankakee River has been captured and encased in a straight-jacket of deepened walls and concrete banks. Once many centuries ago, it was a wild, insane sort of stream which ruthlessly destroyed Indian villages, overflowed maturing corn fields, and swept away wigwams over night.

It is now a meek ditch-like stream from its point of origin near Crump's Point to proximity of the Indiana Kankakee State Park. Before the white man ever appeared in the region, the Indians had learned to distrust the river. It would be quiet and still and bored for years on end, and then, with the accumulation of heavy spring waters and swamp waters up near the St. Joseph River, it would flood everything and take lives of both mankind and animals.

The original name of the stream was "Wolf Land". The various words — Thea-kiki, Huakiki, or Kankekiki meant the land inhabited by wolves and river.

After leaving the site of the ancient Eaton's Ferry, the reconstructed river begins to resume something of its original majesty and is again a thing of beauty even though it is occupied by many great rocks here and there.

The great, almost mountainous boulder that once obstructed the river near Momence, Illinois, was blown up and removed many years ago to permit steamboat transportation from the timber country and saw mills down to Illinois markets. Because its numerous bends and

acres of shallows made steamboating practically impossible, the various efforts resulted in considerable loss to the promoters. Bartlett called the upper part "The Vanishing River".

Turning to ancient translations, several references are found to the Kankakee. Charlevoix on September 17, 1721, wrote: "Yesterday I walked from the St. Joseph River with my feet in the water, then came to some ponds. These are the source of the Kankakee extending to Ox Head Prairie. There is scarce enough water in the Kankakee here to float a boat, and in one of the bends the turn was so abrupt that it broke a boat."

From the date of the Paris Treaty in 1763, until the War of 1812, the Kankakee was a forgotten river. It was used continually as a waterway, of course, but no traveler left any mention of it. It was accepted simply as a part of the great waterway that extended almost the North and South width of the continent. When the English became the possessors of the region, they frequently sent their soldiers and officials from Mackinaw to Kaskaskia or Cahokia by way of this river; and from time to time, they attempted to settle various fragments of Indian tribes along its banks, as the officials of New France had done. The Kankakee valley was miasma-covered and mosquito infested during the summer, and as had been done by hundreds of previous generations, the Indians moved to the end of Lake Michigan during the warm weather.

The first well-kept diary of a traveler on the Kankakee was that by Amasa Cornwall Washburn in 1831. Through the kindness of his granddaughter, Miss Gertrude Hull of Milwaukee, a copy was made for the Society of Pioneers. "We had no one but ourselves to care for," wrote young Washburn in June of that year. "We were headed for the Des Plains country to settle, and we are convinced that it will not do to pay \$5 a day to have our baggage transported, while we walked along beside the wagon, at the rate of 20 miles a day."

The beginning of the Washburn journey was presumably a Michigan town named Mottville. The diary continues:

There are seven of us in the party, and we brought two spacious dug-out canoes. On the morning of June 1st, we lashed the two together end to end, put our trunks and baggage on board, and set sail with a red flag flying down the St. Joseph River. Toward South Bend the river is a delightful stream. We are in good spirits and with high expectations — and we went with great rapidity.

By noon we had passed several houses, but being ambitious and wishing to profit by all the sunlight, and not doubting that we would find other houses, we passed by, until darkness approached without us discovering any other dwellings.

All hope of finding a house for shelter was now lost; for it was so dark we couldn't see if there was any. Therefore we went ashore, kindled a fire, spread our buffalo robes on the ground and lay down upon them. Opening our umbrellas over our heads, we spent a quiet and restful night.

June 2. This morning at the first approach of light we started, and within a few hours we arrived at the south bend village where the St. Joseph turns. We had rigged up some sort of sails that made our progress better. We had apparently come about 60 miles, and actual sailing time is about 12 hours.

Here we had to hire some teamster to take our canoes and baggage some six miles to a stream called the Kankakee, which is in Indiana. In coming to this river we had to go through soft marshlands where the horses often mired, and we all had to assist in lifting them out.

In putting our boats in, we found it to be at first very small, shallow, and crooked; sometimes so narrow an active person could jump across. By two o'clock in the afternoon we were all ready to sail again, and soon made our way winding and turning toward every point of the compass. When night approached we were hardly out of sight of the starting point, and as by this time there was no place to land. We continued all night.

June 3. As we continued the stream became much wider and much deeper. We were surrounded by a desolate marshy country and frequently saw on the bank rattle snakes when we put our poles on the shore to push. Towards the middle of the day, we began to suffer with thirst as all the water we had was tepid and ill tasting marsh water, which was bitter from all its reptiles, animals, and decayed vegetation.

The party had only covered an estimated thirty miles in a direct route. Washburn mentions the 'Lake' prior to entering the broad English Lake.

The diary continues:

In the afternoon it became very warm with a good deal of thunder and lightning and some little rain. Towards night we came to a little piece of dry land at a big bank on a neck of land between two lakes. We landed and went in search of water but without success. There were a few old Indian camps, but the well was worse than the river, in consequence of standing considerable time without cleaning. We searched about for some time, returning disconsolate and weary. So we got into our boats and proceeded.

In a little time we were really out of sight of dry land. We learned that we would be obliged to again stay on the water all night. It was at dusk when we saw a widening of the water, but thought it of little consequence. We thought we could make our way over it before dark, but as we proceeded we found the dimly lit shore ahead seemed to recede from us.

Clouds arose and we soon found ourselves in almost impenetrable darkness. In a little while, we were utterly lost on a great expanse of water and knew not which way to turn. At this time great hordes of mosquitoes and other insects descended upon us, but being provided with a little dry wood we built fires on the bow of each boat where we had built a clay and rock surface for just this purpose. The destruction which we made of the insects was something beyond description. The

fire soon dispersed them and they fell in great multitudes all around us. Although our fires kept us from being virtually carried off by these insects, they made a great deepening of the gloom around us.

The doleful sounds of bull frogs on every side, occasionally punctuated by the honk of a wild goose alarmed by our fire, made the night positively noisy. We were sailing or paddling furiously about, unaware of where we were going until it was proposed that we let the two boats drift, only keeping them in line. Thus we obtained and took the direction of the current. Although the water moved very sluggishly, we were able to ascertain the direction of the current. With the help of our oars we were soon out of this horrible place, but we went into one more dangerous.

We entered into a deep and wide stream of fast moving water. We rowed from side to side searching for a landing place, but found the water was bounded on either side by a sort of thatch-grass that grew to enormous heights and seemed at a little distance to be high banks. As we sought a landing, the wind came up, blowing hard, and there was a great appearance of rain. The waves began running so high as to be dangerous, and we wished for a new day. Fortunately for us, the wind blew off into the distance and the rain stopped — it was only a trickle —so we proceeded carefully along in the dark. Our little Ark—for such it now seemed to us — moved slowly, until before long the long-wished-for sun arose.

With the rising of the sun there came also a rising of the winds again and waves ran so high they seemed about to swamp the boat. Frequently they washed into our canoes. By exerting all our strength and all our skill, we were able to keep afloat and were soon driven westward with great velocity until we found ourselves in another narrow channel with high banks. About noon there arose a heavy thunder shower, furiously raining and hailing. We, of course, had no shelter but our umbrellas, which were of little consequence in such a storm.

Near sunset, as we were about to enter a piece of woods, we discovered we were coming into a still larger lake far exceeding anything we had yet seen — with waves foaming and running furiously.

Evidently this was the lower bulge of English Lake, which at that period was much broader than was pictured by surveyors a few years later. The diary continues:

The first proposal was to tie up to a tree and remain where we were until the storm should cease. But not knowing our distance from any civilization and being very short of provisions, we concluded to put out a little ways with the hope of proceeding, but being always prepared to hurry back into the wood-lined banks if such was unwise. We soon discovered that with some hard labor we could attain the leeward side and could sail along the bul-rushes without being endangered by the high waves. In this way we effected the needed passage and a little

before dark on June 4, we found ourselves in a stretch of smooth water.

There being no chance of building a shore fire and not knowing to what specie of wild beast we might be exposed., and by now being somewhat familiar with sailing in the night, we concluded to go on — but before long we entered into a most singular place. I cannot fully describe it but at night it seemed to be a vast area of water to which we could discover no bounds, out of which grew numerous groves or bunches of trees — thus we were lost again, and once more had to let the tandem boats drift with the current. We eventually got through this place and found ourselves in a rapid stream formed by a narrowing of the river. We ran against breakers which we assumed were caused by some sort of massed fallen trees and vegetation, and perhaps stones, ahead in the water. We, of course, became alarmed for there was a definite danger there, but happily we discovered a shore which we made up to — only to discover it to be a wet prairie. As we edged along we were escorted by wolf howls following us along the banks. They seemed to come from different directions. None of us were accustomed to such and we were uncertain. As for me, I was much fatigued and slept quietly in the boat all through the night, while most of the others remained awake in fear.

June 5. This day we still sailed along the big expanse of water into a wilderness and a marsh country, seldom seeing any dry land, and having again to drink brackish river water all the day as our containers of water obtained up the river were now empty. At nightfall we ran out of the main channel and right among the trees. Here we were fortunate enough to find a little island or grove on which, though very wet, we succeeded in building a fire to keep off any wild animals, and we lay down in our boats to sleep.

This knoll, which is on the range line of Four West, was still in 1800 listed as a resting place by canoe travelers. Prof. Alfred H. Meyer of the Valparaiso University, in his report on the Kankakee in 1934, showed it as being a place of long abandoned wigwams. It evidently had long been a camping place. It is located just a mile east of the river's most southern bend in Indiana.

On June 6, we started our journey with sad countenances and heavy hearts for there was no sign of us coming to a civilized country, and we were destitute of provisions. Only by accident did one of our party discover a small deer asleep along the grassy banks. We drifted silently by until one man stepped ashore, returned to the location, and killed the animal.

This was on dry land, the first we had seen for some time, and much was now turning in our favor. Here we camped, dressed the deer, made some bread, and had a delicious feast. We took what we thought we could eat before it spoiled and once more got into our boats, sailing onward.

In the afternoon we discovered some Indians on the bank about fifty yards back from the stream. They seemed to be young boys about sixteen or seventeen. There were probably four of them and one horse and several dogs. They eyed us very attentively and made some motions as we passed them which we did not understand. We had passed a fording place but they did not turn back but kept up with us from over the river. The place was at the northernmost bend in the Kankakee River and as we disregarded their motions one of the boys got on the horse and rode wildly off, while the others and the dogs turned back with great shouts. We anticipated that the boy on the horse had gone back to warn someone, and we feared they might be alarming the native countryside to come and attack us. Although we had been assured the Indians no longer attacked the whites, we seemed to be too far away from any semblance of civilization to have any local tribal rule apply—but fortunately we were happily disappointed.

Night soon approached, and we had indications that several Indians occupied sites in the locality, and still feared we might be molested so we remained within our boats and continued onward during the night.

On this particular night it became my regular turn to pilot the boat again. There was a moon at first but it soon went down—and then came a most odd and extraordinary light. The clouds were thick and dark all around except a little streak in the west—which was frequently directly before us, as our general direction was west. The odd light gave sufficient illumination so I could see a considerable distance ahead. We were not much surprised at the first showing of the light, thinking it was a sunset glow, but it continued on until after midnight when it finally began to grow dim. About this time we ran against several rocks that the light no longer pointed out, so we turned to the shore, fastened our boats under some overhanging, partly submerged trees, and went to sleep.

This is the Sabbath, June 7. But not being a place where we could find a village church, we thought it best to proceed until evening, we could again find a place to land. We almost ran into rapids again where it was difficult to pass. When I was piloting the boats last evening, guided as it were by the light mentioned, I thought of the Light that led the Children of Israel through the wilderness to their stops to camp and rest. If it would not be thought ill of me, I should say this light of last night was so intended for us; for without it, we should not have been able to steer the boat at all. If, as before, we had let the pair of boats follow the current again, we should surely have gone over the falls. I called it a dangerous task even with the light. After crossing these new rapids, we again found dry land, went ashore, and spread out our buffalo robes and great coats to dry for they had been drenched.

Next morning—that is this Sunday morning—we cooked our breakfast and rested quietly until mid-afternoon. Then the group made a motion to go on—which we did, although it was not my wish. In the

evening we entered into a woods where it was very dark. The stream was very crooked, with many logs fallen into it and all were almost swept off. Not wishing to go on under such conditions, we tied the boats to a tree and built a fire on the fire-platforms in the boats. We were afraid of animals again; therefore, those fires on the bows must be watched all night long for they could easily burn everything up. Here we remained until daylight and were not molested at all. I hardly think any animals except those who live in the water or in the tree tops, would exist here.

Today we had to labor very hard. It is June 8. On the now broadened river we made very little headway because of perverse head-winds. We had the consolation of seeing all dry land and some horses feeding, which we assumed belonged to Indians for we were manifestly in an Indian country again.

About the middle of the day the wind blew very high and there were big waves. We had to keep close to the shore. As we could not all work at the same time with only oars for four, some went ashore and walked along for now we were in prairie country. I and three others attempted to manage the boats, but two of my companions were inept at rowing and before I hardly knew it, we were driven from the shore by the wind. With the two boats still well lashed together we were in trouble for a falls stood just ahead. We tried to remain stationary for some time to figure out what to do. If we were driven into the current and over the small falls broadside, we were sure to be wrecked for the storm was violent. We decided to regain our close-to-shore position, which we did after much hard effort. In an hour or two the others came back, having found no game nor catch any fish. Our food was now almost gone. We chewed some slippery elm bark for supper. We tied up there for the night.

June 9. All the provisions we now have on hand is a little wheat flour. After consultation we decided not to bake this but to mix it with water and drink it. This afforded us about a quart each which we drank in three periods. Beside this we had nothing but some grape vines, some roots we dug which someone among us knew, and some berries.

It was very warm all day and twice we came to rapids over which we had to go. Once rocks forced us to turn broadside with the rapids but after much struggle we went over a considerable high falls end-wise. We now had become pretty expert sailors. Once we found a fast running surface that seemed to fall away from us like an inclined plane. It seemed to be underlaid with a flat rock. We went onward about 100 rods and found we were at the Des Plaines River, which comes down in a trough from the north. We acquired much velocity in descending our slope and had to turn into a sort of short cut to avoid trouble. By so doing we were in another river. A short distance ahead we found a white man living where we received food.

## CHAPTER VI

There have been many strange theories connected with the Kankakee River; some may have a scientific basis. It has long been known that the vicinity is well marked with deposits of bog iron. There was at least one effort made to ship the ore to a smelter, but the charges made by the railroads made shipping impossible. There were some smelting efforts made by early settlers but they were only partially successful. The most mysterious thing about this bog iron is that Solon Robinson, an early settler at Crown Point, discovered a great pile of slag, cinders and chipped cast iron deeply buried in the natural debris along the river — on which there were growing several trees whose rings indicated an age of well over 200 years.

This discovery included the stone slabs of an old furnace exactly like those found along the Atlantic Coast—the origin of which has never been determined. Robinson, who wrote a monthly column for the country's leading agricultural magazines, covered the subject of "Prehistoric Smelting" in several of his articles. Among the iron articles he unearthed or among those found by settlers and given to him was a number of hammer-heads which had been cast with a hole in the center for a handle, and an egg-shaped cast iron ball about the size of a quart jar with a groove around its middle in imitation of the stone hammers shaped by the ancient Indians.

Among the now-lost relics once possessed by Robinson prior to 1947 was also a broken section of what seemed to be a crudely made griddle with part of the handle still intact.

In the *Madison, Ind., Republican Banner* of April 30, 1835, Robinson wrote: "I am confident that there were more or less successful efforts at iron smelting along the bog iron deposits of the Kankakee long before Columbus arrived in the Western Hemisphere. I have seen several piles of slag and charcoal—and a deposit of some material that seemed like cinders, and bits of chipped-off cast iron, and from neighbors I have obtained pieces of cast iron, tools. I suggest a Norse origin of these relics — and I agree with Peter Kalm who said that there were definitely Norsemen ranging through this country before the day of Columbus."

Early surveyors, especially Uriah Biggs, A. E. Van Ness, and Jeremiah Smith, reported such things as sulphur outlets, natural gas, bitumen, and great deposits of bog iron along the Kankakee. It was Uriah Biggs who said 600 acres of bog iron along the Kankakee in Jasper County shows some ancient signs of casting.

There was also a pitch deposit at a place named "Asphaltum" in Jasper County that long before the arrival of the French was used by the Indians to "pitch their canoes".

Rev. T. H. Ball, a Lake County historian, once wrote: "There was a die-made nail found embedded in a tree here several years ago that had been there at least 200 years. It was a type of nail such as I have seen in the Eastern museums presumably having been cast from the nail dies of Virginia,

which in turn may have been originated in the Scandinavian countries".

The Roman manuscript of "Discoveries and Explorations" in North America mentions one Eirik Gnupsson, Bishop of Greenland, who with a party of colonists sailed in 1121 to the new lands to the west. He was never heard of again, says Prof. D. V. Olson. This was a time when an epidemic of plague was ravaging Europe. The colonists who perhaps landed on our shores may have brought with them a few cases and several deaths may have occurred. Thinking their ship was infected these colonists may have burned the vessels with the hope of building a new one, but in the meantime, they could have hurried far inland to escape the disease.

It has long been assumed by some students and writers that there was quite a number of these Norsemen who could have found the Leif Erickson houses at Cape Sable, and who moved westward by way of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and to the end of Lake Michigan.

Several writers have "guessed" that the Iroquois Indians were an off-shoot of a Norse and Indian maid alliance of that far distant past. That these same Iroquois were frequently located along the Kankakee is an accepted fact. Probably they had learned from their white ancestors the method of smelting iron.

Undoubtedly the wierdest theory attached to the Kankakee is that of the Copper Miners of Superior. An unknown tribe of intelligent individuals mined copper there for about a thousand years.

Scientists, miners, teachers and meteorologists have repeatedly visited the strange un-accounted-for copper mines of Isle Royal and vicinity. They have all come to one conclusion—that an estimated four hundred million pounds of copper were taken out of those mines about ten thousand years ago. They have been almost unanimous in an additional conclusion—that at least a thousand miners were employed in the mines over the years.

Who these strange miners were is, of course, unknown. One theory is that they were visitors from South America, perhaps from Yucatan, from the present land of the Mayas, or from some of their unknown ancestors.

Evidently they traveled by dugouts up the Mississippi River to the Illinois, the Des Plains, and the Kankakee Rivers. It is known that in those mining days both Lake Superior and Lake Michigan were several feet higher than today with a navigable connection between the two.

Summer after summer, say the theorists, when the Kankakee was the waterway connecting the Gulf of Mexico with Lake Superior, these Mayans paddled a fleet of dugouts from Yucatan to the copper mines and back, loaded with copper ore.

## CHAPTER VII

Sometime in the ancient past there was a period when the bottom land along the Kankakee was only prairie and there were no trees except a few willows along the banks. When the French came in 1673, or whenever it was, they had orders to build a number of small forts. At the end of the lake they built one of logs, but the one ordered to be built on the Kankakee had to be built with walls of rammed earth such as were one time built in parts of France.

The walls were about eight feet high and three feet thick. Around the top was a foot path. The area enclosed comprised about four acres. It had 14 embrasures for gun emplacements, the little "French cannon of brass" in common use at the time. The fort faced up the river and could only be approached from the rear and that approach was a water-covered ridge constituting a secret route through the swamp.

In 1935, a few visiting scientists came to study the remains of that old dirt wall, then only a water washed ridge of hardly three feet in height. Before that a local engineer and scientist had surveyed the ground and had located all the old openings in the wall. They made a drawing of the ruins showing its probable appearance when first built.

Dr. McAllister of the Chicago University, Prof. W. A. Briggs, and A. J. Bowser wrote exhaustive articles on the subject; but it was only with the translation of the "C23" paper that the establishment of the fort by the French Military Department was found in history.

Long after the fort had been abandoned and a heavy forest of trees grew along the Kankakee and on the numerous islands, the first settlers came. Tree cutting began, and the first count made of tree rings showed 173. There was also a number of "Little forts" scattered throughout the country. One at the present site of Three Oaks, one at River De Chimens, one at the end of Lake Michigan in Porter County, and one at Chicago—and probably others.

All of the forts, including Fort Kankakee, were apparently deserted in 1763 when the Treaty of Paris was signed. The French settlers deserted their claims also, and according to old history, moved over to the towns of Beaverville and Papeneau at St. Anne.

The Quinaton Documents locate the dirt walled fort in Pleasant Township in Porter County in the southwest corner of Section 22. A site which was once owned and occupied by Hank Broay.

Rooting hogs and the farmer's plow have erased from the landscape this Fort Kankakee, and only on the old maps is its location mentioned.

The whole Kankakee story is largely one of conjecture. LaSalle apparently traversed it twice. After going to the site later called Creve Couer south of present-day Peoria and anxiously awaiting some word from his ship *The Griffen*—and after sending out some French "engagees" as messengers, who promptly deserted—LaSalle, the tall Mohican White

Beaver, and two young Recollect Friars went back to Montreal afoot.

The return trip in the spring of 1680 was evidently again by way of the Kankakee, the party having again come down the St. Joseph. E. H. Lyon wrote: "*The Griffen* never found its way to the St. Joseph. It is believed by some that it was wrecked near Beaver Island in Lake Michigan." He was writing of the first trip. This is no fairyland in December, and it is not strange that in the explorer's party certain murmurs and mutterings of discontent should then be heard.

With LaSalle was the faithful Henri Tonti, he of the Iron Hand, and the Belgian priest, Louis Hennepin, and three Recollect monks, including the venerable Father Gabriel Ribourde, then 64 years old, and due in a few days to perish at the hands of the savages.

The expedition was supplemented with others who were soldiers, boatmen, and adventurers. One exception was White Beaver the Mohican, the tall hunter who stood head and shoulders above most of the members of the crew. He was next to Tonti the most reliable—as well as the most valuable support of LaSalle's cause. His skill supplied the larder—and he was the guide and the guard.

With great blankets of snow, December's cutting wind, and the need of carrying everything on the backs of men at the portage, there were several who mutinied and wanted to turn back. Duplessis of historical infamy once attempted to shoot LaSalle in the back.

The Miamis were the "Lords of the Forest" in 1679—but they offered no protest to the party going through their domain. Over the oozy, zig-zag channel of the Kankakee the party continued, eventually arriving at the site where the fort named St. Louis was built—and name changed to Creve Couer-Broken Heart—when the long wait brought no word of *The Griffen*.

LaSalle had decided to devote all his worldly possessions—and his life if need be—to seize and hold a new Empire for France—and to pay the cost of the undertaking out of the great fur trade.

A large part of this proposed empire was to have been in the Kankakee Valley. Neither the Kankakee, the Des Plains, the Illinois, nor the Mississippi regions at Creve Couer has been well described by the explorers. Hennepin exaggerated it; LaSalle gave it only a casual mention, speaking of the region as a whole. There is no definite word picture available except the items gleaned from Father Hennepin's book. The reader of that translation must guess where truth prevails and where imagination takes over. We can agree that the distance in leagues, converted into miles, was 227. At that time, the river was mostly marshland, sometimes ran between deep banks, at times broadened into vast lakes frequently impeded with massive boulders; and as a whole, it was to be considered mostly swampland.

It is also known that many of the French *courier du bois* deserted during the nights and went to live with the Indians. The areas now known as English Lake, Kankakee Crossing, North Judson, North Liberty, Bourbonnais, St. Anne, San Pierre, LaCrosse, Hebron, Beaverville, Wilmington, Momence, and many others were once Indian villages. It was to these

places the deserters made their way, and during one or another of the LaSalle trips, he went into these villages and captured these deserters. Some he punished, some he sent back to Canada in chains, and in two or three instances he is said to have executed them on the spot.

In each instance the story finally got back to Canada, and word was passed from Frenchman to Frenchman. On the ill-fated northward journey from Texas to the Mississippi many years later, LaSalle was killed by his own men somewhere on the trail. His body was rolled into a shallow grave—and dirt shoveled onto his face said one report. In any event the party went back to the ship and finally made its way back to France. The arrogant and cruel treatment given the French employes on the Kankakee is said to have been directly the cause of LaSalle's death.

Only a few years ago, a writer discussing LaSalle with some French inhabitants of the St. Anne region said, "When I spoke of LaSalle, the informant spat upon the ground and rubbed it in with his heel."

## CHAPTER VIII

All fairy tales should begin: "Once Upon a Time—" so—once upon a time there was a population along the Kankakee called The Mound Builders. There were many similar populations elsewhere of the same type and as far as is known, they occupied land in the marshlands and swampy areas. There were 32 family groups of this ancient race residing in the Kankakee Valley. There may have been more, but only 32 mounds have been located in this area so that is the number accepted.

They were hunters, fishermen, and trappers who cultivated some adjacent fields where they grew grains and pumpkins. During each summer, after the crops had been planted, these unknown people migrated to higher grounds where there was a prevailing breeze. Until the first fall frost their swampland sites were infested with mosquitoes.

At first these people did not live on the mounds—in fact they had no mounds except perhaps small conical piles under which they buried their dead. The story of the first building of the latter vast flat-topped mounds, used for platforms on which to erect their wigwams or other structures, is the tale contained in this chapter.

Some time in that very distant past, while the women were planting their crops and the hunters were out seeking game, one of the men happened to ascend an elevation which gave him a distant view of the landscape—and on this occasion he saw a fearsome sight.

In a distant valley he saw a great herd of gigantic animals. Each animal was several times larger than the largest elk or buffalo. There were perhaps a hundred of them; and they were slowly, but insistently, drifting directly toward the village where the women were tending the fields.

Hardly believing his eyes, this lone hunter ran home and told what he had seen. Two or three medicine men or tribal leaders went to the hill to see for themselves. They didn't believe there could be an animal "bigger than six buffalo." But one hurried glance and the two turned and ran back to the village shouting a warning. For the animals were certainly headed for the prairies and for the Kankakee River.

Quickly, the word was passed to all the families. Everyone ran to the canoes. Long before these massive animals had reached the top of the divide, the people were safe out in the great flood-expanses of the river. In great alarm they sat in their canoes and watched the frightful herd as it slowly grazed its way down the south side of the rise and into the prairies.

In cases where the canoe was overloaded with women, children, and the aged, the able-bodied men stepped over the side and stood waist deep in the water. All up and down the Kankakee the canoes ventured, taking the warning to all the settlements. Across the prairies beyond the great animals, a few daring messengers hurried to other communities. "Get into the swamps" was the warning, for it had quickly been observed that the

strange animals were intelligent enough to keep out of the soft, almost quick sand areas of marshland.

But it soon became evident that these frightened people couldn't exist in their canoes or standing in the water. Then it was that some man among the population suggested that they dip up the soft ooze at their feet, drain it, and then pile it into a sort of flat-topped hill to be soon dried by the hot summer sun.

Perhaps fire or the wheel is justly called the world's most important invention—but as far as the people of the Kankakee were concerned, the idea of digging the earth from around the natives' feet and piling it into great, broad, quickly dried mounds was their greatest invention. All up and down the river and across the prairies and far into the interior, where other herds of animals had appeared, there began a system of mound building.

Safe from the new type of animals, these people not only erected safe mounds on which to construct their houses, but at the same time they had a canoe route right up to their front yard. They could paddle across the river where there were no dangers, and there hunt fish, and supply food for the families. They could gather wild rice, edible roots, bulbs, berries, and nuts. They had safety and comfort of a sort; hour by hour, day by day, they expanded their building platforms. Soon their daily life was as serene as it could be, although knowing that just beyond them there moved back and forth over the prairies great animals that had tusks. And so it was that the mound builders came into being.

One of the strangest things about these mysterious people was that one of them left his picture behind him when he was buried in his own back yard—no, that's not exactly right—his picture was buried with him.

In Tennessee there were herds of these strange animals, which we now call mastodons, exactly the same as there were along the Kankakee. The famed Shiloh battle ground was once a swampy area, and there, in recent years, some of these household graves have been dug up.

The government booklet on Shiloh says, "There were about 30 mounds in the Shiloh area, ranging in height from eight to fifteen feet. All except one conical burial mound are flat-topped platform mounds."

"An effigy pipe, now on display at park headquarters, was removed from a mound by the Park Commission in 1899." And there is a picture of that effigy. A picture of the type of mankind different from all other races, a virtual picture of one of the mound builders.

What finally happened to cause the death of all the mastodons in the world is problematical. Skeletons have been found through much of the United States. The Kankakee Swamps have produced a dozen partial skeletons, some almost complete.

The levelling of the mounds, after the swamps were drained and the river straightened, has just about eliminated the last of these prehistoric bones which have been scattered to various museums throughout the region.

To write about the Mound Dwellers and the Mastodon, one must also write about the era of reclamation. It was during the draining of the

swamps, the dredging of the river, and the ditching of the low prairies that most of the bones of historic animals were unearthed. There was one identified as the hairy mouth, unearthed by an earth moving machine in the south end of Porter County in 1911. Workmen on the Kosalke Drainage Ditch found several great bones that had apparently been joined together, and as they operated the machines, the workmen discussed their find.

When toes, molars, and smaller bones were dug up, the men decided to divide the accumulation—then consisting of four leg bones, a half dozen ribs, a lower part of a jaw, and a number of “odds and ends”. Each workman took a part of the collection to his home and called neighbors in to see the gigantic remains of some elephant-like animal of the past.

The skeleton had been discovered on the property of Mrs. Sazza Cooper. Soon the towns of Valparaiso, Hebron, and Kouts were visited by many curious men and women from the whole Calumet region. Mrs. Cooper said she was “flabber-gasted”. Those bones were hers—museums paid great sums for exhibits of the distant past—and goodness knows, she said, that these bones are distant enough. So she demanded that all the bones be delivered to her home. And when the workmen laughed, saying, “finder’s keepers” she got furious and went to Valparaiso, the county seat, and hired an attorney to get her bones back. In the meantime, other bones were being unearthed. It was assumed that the whole skeleton was to be eventually recovered.

Mrs. Cooper took all her saving, amounting to about two hundred dollars, and ordered an attorney to recover bones. The attorney had to consult an encyclopedia, to read up on Mastodons. Then he had to consult a few volumes of certain laws and read up on museums, and ditching contractor’s rights, and on this and that. Thus, he used up Mrs. Cooper’s two hundred bucks—without recovering a single bone! The matter grew into a “dirty job”. Every time the attorney visited the ditching site to claim any new bones unearthed, the operator seemed to unavoidably drop the empty bucket in a mud puddle close to where the attorney happened to be standing.

Thus, the attorney said he’d have to have another two hundred dollars—and Mrs. Cooper went to the bank. The bank kindly did a little telephoning in behalf of the lady, and soon found that mastodon bones, and other prehistoric bones dug up along the Kankakee were virtually “a dime a dozen”. The museums in the region had more of them than they could exhibit. So Mrs. Cooper was advised to forget about her bones.

The workmen, the neighbors, and even Mrs. Cooper eventually got a few Mastodon bones for souvenirs. After a time they disappeared. One by one they were donated to the Porter County Historical Society for their museum. Today, they have a skeleton about half assembled. Every once in a while, some housewife demands that “that darn old bone” be taken out of the closet—so it finds its way to the local museum.

Mrs. Cooper once said, “The only thing I ever got out of that law suit was to learn the meaning of the word “Pleistocene”. It’s an almighty expensive word if you ask me.”

## CHAPTER IX

Panthers and wolves were the predatory animals of the Kankakee and many were the strange tales told about them by the old timers. As soon as the white settlers brought sheep and poultry into the region, they were forced to intensify their campaign against these animals. Panther dogs were imported and local dogs trained to hunt and tree the panthers. A woman of uncertain years named Aunt Polly was especially good at training the dogs.

The legend of "Aunt Polly and the Panther" has been handed down for five or six generations, Mrs. Dilley has said:

Solomon and James Dilley, brothers, and Mrs. James Dilley, a daughter, Eudora, and 12 year old son, David, came to Porter County Indiana in 1836 before Lake County was created. They took up claims and established homes for themselves — and, of course, there was Aunt Polly. She was the wonder-worker of the Dilley tribe. She was Eudora's grandmother. I think she came first—in any event I remember that her little cabin and the barn lot had a rail fence around it before any of the others did.

In an area that I called the back yard, Aunt Polly had a great pile of fence rails piled up. Her property had been pretty well covered with a second growth oak, a sort of thin tree about 12 feet tall, and fairly straight. She had all these cut and piled in this back yard area. Just Above this pile of rails was a gigantic white oak that partly shaded the chicken yard. On one or another of the extending limbs of this tree, a panther had been known to lie, waiting a chance to grab a big fat hen.

Aunt Polly had a panther dog that was a wonder. He'd spot a panther without making a sound and then hurry back to Aunt Polly to tell her to get her rifle. There was a neighbor up the creek a few rods who also had a dog—a noisy barker, yapping, and howling dog whenever he smelled a panther within a mile. This neighbor dog had been brought to Aunt Polly's to train him to 'keep his big mouth shut', and the old lady was doing a good job with him. Aunt Polly had a way with dogs. And she believed in tea leaves.

"But you ain't heard nothing yet," said Eudora. Aunt Polly could virtually hypnotize a panther. Let her get one spotted up a tree, and she'd back off slowly, keeping her eye on the animal, and then she'd pick up her rifle where she'd left it standing in a fence row—and bring that panther down.

Aunt Polly was one of our first school teachers, having been the first one to replace men in the lower end of Lake County. When the students would get restless, she'd take time out to tell them a story, and that's where I heard this tale first.

It was mainly about Seymour Holmes and little Adaline. Adaline was also a Dilley—a niece of Aunt Polly's. Seymour Holmes was her

husband. They made a right nice young couple; only Adaline loved to go to church each Sunday to see and be seen — and she was something to see! While old Parson 'Crown Point Jones' raised the roof with his sermons, all the men would be watching Adaline.

Seymour didn't exactly like to see the ogling males appraising his pretty wife, so finally he would hide Adaline's 'Sunday-go-to-meeting' dress, so she'd have to stay home. Some time Saturday Seymour would go up in the cabin loft and take that dress out and hide it in a tree-crotch somewhere. One Saturday Adaline thought to beat him at the game and she went up to get the dress. But Seymour happened to have an inkling of what she intended doing, and he had beat her to it. The next week he took that dress out on Friday night.

But on that night an almost unending, sky-darkening flock of passenger pigeons settled over the woods. That was the time Seymour Holmes had a secret cleaning job on his hands with that dress during the next day or two.

One day the tea leaves told Aunt Polly she was going to need two dogs that day. She could see the shapes of the two dogs in the bottom of the tea cup and there was seemingly a panther there also.

It was quite late in the evening when Seymour came home from helping David Dilley pile a lot of winter wood in the lean-to finding himself being paced by a panther. He ran to the pile of fence rails and climbed up, hollering for Aunt Polly. The panther went up the white oak and lay along a big branch, waving his tail and threatening Seymour with his yellow eyes. 'Help! Help!' he called. Aunt Polly shooed the two dogs back in the kitchen because it wasn't quite time to turn them loose. She had a little scheme to work out.

Thus, Aunt Polly turned her hypnotic eyes on the panther and stood there watching Seymour.

"Get your dogs and gun, Aunt Polly," he insisted.

But Aunt Polly said, "Seymour, it's pretty evident you're in dire distress. Now I don't exactly want to see Adaline widowed just yet—but first I must have your 'never-to-be-broken' promise that you'll never hide Adaline's Sunday clothes again—and let her go to church,"

"But Aunt Polly—"

"Seems to me this ain't no time to be 'butting', Seymour. It don't hurt anything to have Adaline go to meeting—even if she does sit pretty well up in front while all the young men sit in the rows behind her and pay more attention to her than they do to the preacher—all I want is your promise you won't hide her Sunday outfit!" She looked up at the panther, which evidently thought he hadn't been observed and was lying very still.

"All right," said Seymour, looking apprehensively up at the panther. "I promise."

So Aunt Polly went back to the house and let the two dogs out and said 'panther'. And those dogs circled around with their noses in

the air — and in a few minutes stationed themselves under the white oak.

Thus, protected from the panther, Seymour came off the wood-pile and scurried toward the house where he met Aunt Polly coming out with her rifle—I guess it was a rifle, although in those days it may have been a musket. Whatever it was, Aunt Polly knew how to use it.

She aimed at the right eye of that varmint, and of course, she killed it first shot—and it fell on the ground at the feet of the dogs, who immediately began worrying it all over the ground. They were sure they had killed it, somehow or other. I remember Aunt Polly said they chewed so many holes in the hide she couldn't even use it for a rug. The trappers along the Kankakee wouldn't even take it as a gift.

Well, that's all there is to the story. Seymour didn't hide Adaline's dresses ever again—but he did hide her shoes and stockings—and of course, she couldn't go to church barefoot.

And Aunt Polly told all the people along the river: "Just you wait until another panther gets Seymour on a wood-pile."

## CHAPTER X

There were several people who lived along the Kankakee that wrote a part of its history. In Porter County there was a young man named J. Lorenzo Werich, who was born close to the river and grew up along its banks. He trapped, farmed, hunted, and guided the wealthy, visiting sportsmen who came annually to visit this area, then called "Sportsmen's Paradise". Born in 1860, he remembered many Civil War incidents—probably because he had heard them reviewed by his father and the older men and women who had lived their adult life during that era.

In 1906 or thereabouts, the draining of the Kankakee Swamps began, and the hunting and fishing became mostly a thing of the past. Werich moved to Logansport, Indiana, about that time and went to work on the railroad. In an accident, he lost his right arm. During his hospitalization, he taught himself to write with his left hand—and to have something to do, he wrote a book entitled "Pioneer Hunters of the Kankakee".

His river stories are mostly of the part of the Kankakee that was famous for its hunting. Beginning somewhere in the vicinity of the little settlement in Indiana called Kankakee and ending at the Illinois city of Kankakee, his stories deal with the river and its most picturesque characters.

Of the six authors listed as having written Kankakee stories, the name of Werich is included with that of Amsby, Burroughs, Ball, Reed, and Bartlett. Lorenzo's father was John Werich, an old timer along the river. His mother was a former country school teacher also along the river. His father looked after the boy's training with guns and traps and boat; the mother saw to it that he obtained an education. As a result, there was probably no one on the Kankakee better qualified to write of its history.

He writes:

I was born on my grandfather's farm, south of Valparaiso, Indiana, in 1860. By the time I was eight years old, we had moved down the prairie to the Kankakee. For the rest of my life—until I moved to Logansport in 1906—I lived on one or another of the 'islands' on the Kankakee.

From my school history books I learned that the Spanish always named everything, while the French seldom did. For this reason, many French exploits and attainments along the Kankakee Valley have never been written. It is only by the 'word-of-mouth' legends of the past that we know what we do about the history of the Kankakee. It was in 1821 that the first white settlers came into the Kankakee region to look over the land, preparatory to buying it as soon as the Indian treaties were signed. They found many French inhabitants still along the river—mostly trappers and traders—who had married Indian wives and had raised a family of French-Indian children.

The ancient Indian village of Tassinong, the vast lake called Grand Marais—afterward called English Lake—and the Astor Fur Trading Post,

within the limits of what is now Valparaiso, were the most prominent settlements in 1821. In those days, the so-called 'Kankakee Swamp' extended well up towards the lower end of Lake Michigan, the northernmost swamp habitation of which was on Snake Island where an Indian Medicine woman lived.

The first white man to settle on an island in the Kankakee, as far as I could ever learn, was a Frenchman named LaBonta. He was an Indian trader. At his invitation, three other French-Indian families came to live on his island and it became known as Indian Island. There was an aged Indian and his squaw also living on the island. He was Shadbonna of historical fame. He was now very old at the time this tale was told but we have no dates. He and his bent, wrinkled squaw, who had once been called the 'beautiful woman of the river', were now forced to use an Indian-made hickory cane to get around. There were two orphaned grandchildren living with them—all in one wigwam.

One day three white hunters came to the island. Everyone was away except this aged squaw and the two children and they were in great distress. Shadbonna had gone down the river to hunt, only to be gone one day, but now three days had passed. The weather was turning very cold; the squaw and children were worried, cold, and hungry.

The hunters went out searching for him. Within a matter of two hours, there was heard a gun shot. One of the party had found the old Indian. The other two went in the signaled direction, and they joined forces to liberate Shadbonna from a split-tree game trap. He had been caught in one of his own traps. He had been there in a cold penetrating rain, suffering through two nights of cold wind and misery.

The hunters got him out—and taking tow of their coats, with long saplings stuck through the sleeves to make a stretcher, they carried the old Indian home. They doctored him up with the usual plasters and salves a trapper normally carries and put him to bed under heavy blankets. One hunter went out and got a deer, while the other two got wood and built up the fire.

The old Indian got well in a few days. He outlived his wife by several years and had seen the two grandchildren in good homes before he accepted aid offered by white men in some distant place. He died in his new home many years later.

The French people owned all this territory for well over a 100 years, only surrendering it to the English in 1763. There were French traders, explorers, and missionaries coming into the valley as soon as the settlements of Montreal and Quebec were far enough advanced to send out hunters and trappers.

Many of the legends date far back, even before the French came. The old squaws of each village would frequently sit before their wigwams and tell the tales of the past. There is always one or two comparatively young women assigned to listen, for it is to them the task of

telling the stories as age claims the older women stated one of our early settlers.

Along the river near the north bend, where the Pottawattomie Ford was located, there settled in 1833 two women as a part of a pioneer family. They were sisters-in-law, and for two or three years, they saw no other white woman. But they soon made friends with the Indians, especially with old story-telling squaws. There was a queer mixture of French and English words, and much of the Algonquin language employed. But before long, these two white women could speak to and understand the old squaws. Almost daily they had one or two of the 'story tellers' as visitors, and from my grandmother, I heard all of these legends as she had in turn heard them from two white women—Mrs. Jerry Sherwood and Mrs. Lillie-Ann Trinkle.

Of course, I have no dates. A date is a rare thing to the Indians, but in a vague sort of way, this incident happened 'many snows ago'.

The tale of the Murder of Red Bird was one of my favorites. According to the oft-told legend, Red Bird was the beautiful daughter of Ausinibee and West Wing, who was the daughter of Silver Heels, a Mississiniwa chief of the Pottawattomies. She was courted only by the sons of chiefs, mostly by Black Fox of the Ottawas, and White Heron, the fleet-footed messenger who ranged from Pottawattomie Lake to War Club Lake and the Rolling Prairie and Wanatah and LaCrosse. His was the duty of communicating with the various villages in behalf of his father, the chief of Indiantown, whose name was Macito.

No matter where his duties took him, White Heron was determined to be back at Tassiong Grove at sunset on a certain beginning of a full moon. This was his arrangement with Red Bird, who at the specified time would go to the cross trails now called Five Points and there await the arrival of her sweetheart. Once or twice her absence from the wigwam came at just the time Black Fox was there for a visit. He grew angry and jealous.

Red Bird's father had asked her not to antagonize Black Fox, for his village, located just across the Kankakee at the ford, was sometimes needed when an Iroquois attack threatened.

There was a French trader up the river a few miles who had fire-water in his stock of trade goods, and to that place, Black Fox frequently went when disappointed at Tassinong Grove. He had been quoted as saying if he didn't get Red Bird, nobody else would.

There were two things he possessed that were highly valuable. His whitetipped Black Fox tail, and his supply of hand-hammered copper arrowheads.

One evening in June, at the appointed time, Red Bird left her wigwam and went to the meeting place at Five Points. When White Heron arrived, he found her dead, crumpled in a thicket of tall grass. She had been killed by an arrow which the murderer had come and extracted. In the murderer's haste to be gone, he failed to notice that

the arrowhead was not on the extracted shaft. So it was that White Heron determined who the assassin was. Even though Black Fox was said by his people to be far, far away, White Heron felt assured that he was the culprit. So he started out on a long, never-ending search for his rival.

When White Heron had found Red Bird dead, he carried her body back to the Grove, where after much lamentation, she had been buried. Over her grave White Heron planted a weeping willow. Then it was he who went across the Kankakee to the Indian Village and asked about Black Fox. Even as he spoke, he saw Black Fox approaching carrying a deer. With him were two other braves, also loaded down with game. The alibi was perfect. Black Fox had been up the Kankakee on a hunting expedition with his two companions.

White Hebron listened quietly, turned, and walked slowly away. He detected a sneer—but other people used copper arrowheads—so he kept on going and the affair was dropped. White Heron disappeared.

A considerable time later, when the squaws were planting their corn, he reappeared. He had two companions with him, and he, too, could prove where he had been for the past few weeks, but Black Fox had disappeared from the over-the-river village and was never seen again.

The murder of Red Bird and the disappearance of Black Fox again became the continual subject in both villages. It remained a dual mystery.

White Heron never took unto himself a wife from the many willing maids. He became a morose, solitary, bitter-hearted Indian, devoted only to tribal affairs. The legend does not tell anything further of his life.

It was in 1834 that Samuel Longyear and Jacob Hurlburt ran the government survey lines across Five Points when an Indian grave was discovered—a poorly covered, carelessly occupied grave. It was apparently the body of a young Indian. There were no identification marks except a black, fox-tailed cap and even that was uncertain, for vermin and rodents had been there for too many years. Hurlburt picked up the skull on his shovel, and added it to the bones that had been disturbed by the survey stake. As usual, the surveyors reburied the skeletons they found—but this one was a trifle unusual—for in the skull there was a small arrowhead—an arrowhead of copper.

## CHAPTER XI

### HULL'S LANDING ON THE KANKAKEE

Because of Porter County's position as an overland connection between the Kankakee and Lake Michigan, it has figured in many historical events—the most pathetic of which was the court martial and death sentence of Gen. Wm. Hull.

Hull's Landing, Hull's Trial, and Hull's Map are a part of Porter County. In examining the War Department documents of Gen. Hull's trial for "Treason, unneeded capitulation to the enemy, unwarranted surrender to the British and conduct unbecoming an officer," it is found that much of the information that went into the trial's records was obtained from Indians. The same Indians who were not allowed to testify or be witnesses against a local whisky peddler, but who were allowed to testify against an army officer's conduct.

Records show that Gen. Hull, stationed with an army in Ohio, was ordered to go to Detroit at the opening of the War of 1812. Previous to his issuing the necessary orders, he made his way to Indiana, following the Army Road. He personally visited Little Fort on the southern end of Lake Michigan, where he learned, from false information supplied by the Indians, that the impending attack on Detroit would be too stupendous to allow any defense.

Hull came to the site of Little Fort by coming up from the Kankakee. Where he encamped—or rather where his soldiers encamped—and crossed over into Porter County, has ever since been known as Hull's Landing. The trail up to Little Fort was known by the first settlers as Hull's Trail. General Hull came only to the site of Little Fort, finding it vacant and of no military value. He drew a crude map of the area, consulted a few companions about the impending attack said by the Indians to be due against Ft. Dearborn, and hurried back to his Ohio headquarters.

With the information gathered on this quick survey, he abandoned any thought of going to Detroit by way of Ft. Dearborn, but went instead, directly north from his Ohio headquarters. He ordered Ft. Dearborn evacuated as soon as he got to Detroit. The history books say he made a feeble attempt to attack the British. Finding considerable resistance, he issued a lot of meaningless orders and withdrew his tentative attacking force into Detroit. For some unexplained reason, he grew unduly fearful of an all-encompassing attack, so he ran up a white flag of surrender.

The trial report said the opening event of the war was a disgrace to the American army. As the attack from British General Brock began, Hull surrendered his army and all of Michigan.

There was a different story to tell on the ocean. On August 19, just three days after the Detroit surrender, Captain Isaac Hull, a nephew of the disgraced General, with *U.S.S. Constitution*, riddled the British frigate *H.M.S. Guerriere*. The *U.S.S. Wasp* defeated *H.M.S. Frolic* on October 13.

The United States warship also captured *H.M.S. Macedonian* on August 31. Admiral Porter opened up the Pacific to a theretofore prohibited American whaling fleet. On September 10th, Capt. Oliver H. Perry defeated the British fleet on Lake Erie. One by one great naval victories opened the way for General W. H. Harrison to invade Canada. On October 5th, he routed the British and the Indians, regaining Michigan and the Northwest Territory.

After Hull's exchange, he was court-martialed and sentenced to death. No explanation, accepting and believing adverse information obtained by his trip to Little Fort, had any effect on the court-martial board. Even the appointed army officer, expected to defend General Hull, was unable to change the plea from treason to incompetence. The hearing convinced the trial board that Hull had expected the British to be victorious in the War of 1812, and thus, he had surrendered as a matter of ultimate policy, which the United States designated as treason.

President Madison refused to concur in the death sentence and pardoned Hull because of his age, (he was about 60) and because of "extenuating circumstances". Several latter day historians have attempted to excuse the offense of Hull, for under the mellowing influence of time, posterity is prone to close its eyes to the wrong-doing of its ancestors, but charity carried to the extreme is maudlin weakness.

During Hull's journey to Little Fort, he was naturally in touch with Pottawattomie Indians—young Indians—for the older men refused to participate. These young Indians were already alerted to the impending attack on Chicago's fort. Main Poc, the leader, had been haranguing them and had promised the signal would soon be given.

All the War Department's documents on Hall's court martial are not available for public examination, only those that have a historical value —none of those that name either attorneys or members of the court. The recapitulation presented by Hull's friends to President Madison is a matter of record, as is also the complete resume of Hull's honorable and highly efficient service in the Revolutionary War. This record, the possibility that any officer could have been equally misled, and the general's age, were all taken into consideration by the President when he issued the pardon.

The Standard Reference Work says: "Hull, William, b 1753-d 1825. An American soldier who, because of his unmartial haste in surrendering Detroit to the British during the War of 1812, was court-martialed and sentenced to be shot."

Born at Derby, Connecticut, he was graduated from Yale, 1772, admitted to the bar 1775. Entered army as captain at opening of the Revolutionary War. Hull served with honor at Trenton, Princeton, Saratoga, Monmouth, and Stony Point. He rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

After the war he was elected to the Senate and in 1805 was appointed governor of the territory of Michigan. Early in 1812 he was raised to the rank of brigadier general, and given command of the Northwestern Army. Soon after the opening of the War of 1812, he tentatively invaded Canada,

and wasted much time issuing worthless proclamations. Crossing back, he surrendered Detroit to General Brock on August 16, 1812, without making any real resistance. The death sentence passed upon Hull was commuted by President Madison, and it is now generally conceded that the blame for the conduct for the Northwest campaign should have been shared by the administration.

Perhaps those of us who examine Hull's Map, or travel over Highway 49, that was once Hull's trail, or visit Hull's Landing, south of Kouts, will now have a less indifferent viewpoint when it is known that the man whose name they bear was once sentenced to be shot by a firing squad for believing and adopting information given to him while he visited the lower end of Lake Michigan in 1812. And those who look at Hull's Map will see thereon a curved-sided oblong which marks the site of Little Fort where Gen. Hull stopped to do his drawing. Little Fort was destroyed by fire during the period of the Ft. Dearborn massacre. Anyone interested can see a copy of the map which was used as end papers in George Brennan's book "The Wonders of the Dunes". It's in many libraries.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE STORY OF GRAPE ISLAND

In the extreme southwest corner of Porter County, where Boone Township comes to a spearhead point, there was a broad spot in the Kankakee that was divided into two channels by a large island. The island lies in Jasper county, but the participants of one of the Northwest's most mysterious crimes lived in Porter County.

Grape Island, like French Island, was settled far back in the days of 1790 by the French. Some came up from the Vincennes country; some came down from Canada. It was here they met. One or the other of these groups brought some famous grape cuttings with them to plant on both islands. They were a particularly luscious grape which had been almost smuggled out of France. The productivity of these vines on this island gave it its name, Grape Island.

Thirty years later the island was deserted and no one knows what became of the settlers. The people at Tassinong and at French Island likewise dropped out of existence at the same time.

The next recorded occupancy of the island was in 1844 when Allen Dutcher of Hebron took up his residence there during the trapping season. Several of the other old time trappers also stopped there temporarily until 1876. Soon John France and James Cotton bought trapping rights. They built a shanty first and as time went on, they prospered until they had built a very good log cabin. They used green cottonwood for the sides. Nice uniform sized, peeled logs were used. Good doors and windows, and even a board roof were built with lumber hauled or floated down from the Indian Island saw mill. It might have been brought by the steamboat that was operating on the Kankakee at that time. In any event, they did a good, expensive job on the roof, running the boards lengthwise, with a five inch overlap.

This pair had been trapping together for years, having come to Grape Island from Long Ridge. Having just sold a few bales of choice furs, they had plenty of money.

One day in early fall, just as they had finished the roof and moved into the new home, France decided to go to Hebron for supplies. For some reason only France went, although it was usual for both to go as they had to buy pretty good sized loads on each trip. As a rule, they went early in the day so they could get back by night. On this occasion, France went late in the day and remained all night in Hebron.

Early the next day he started back with a very small pack of supplies. When he arrived at his boat, he saw no one about and although the new cabin was screened by a row of trees, he felt that something was wrong. He called, "I'm back, Jim", but received no answer.

He pulled the skiff ashore but didn't stop to pick up his pack. He hurried up the bank. Coming within sight of the new cabin, he found

one whole end of it a charred ruin and the roof mostly burned away. Inside, the whole room ad been gutted by fire. On the floor by his bunk lay the fire-scarred body of Jim Cotton.

France later told the authorities he had stood in the open doorway and just looked, shocked beyond words. Then he stepped over to his dead partner and saw that he had been shot through the forehead.

France wasn't able to tell exactly what he did next, but somehow he got back to the skiff and went up to Loomis's, to Stones', and to Bryants' places, finding no one. He went on to the Gidly's property where sometimes a trapper stopped. Finding no one, he half-walked, half-ran, all the way back to Hebron. Someone there sent word to the sheriff at Valparaiso while others accompanied France back to the island. The Porter County sheriff couldn't come as it wasn't in his county. Word was sent to the Jasper sheriff at Rensselaer. It was late in the afternoon when he, the coroner, and a driver arrived with a spring wagon. After a brief examination, while the others rolled the body in a blanket and put it in the wagon, the sheriff questioned France suspiciously. Cotton's pockets had been emptied, and his money gone, but his watch was untouched and still running.

If some stranger had been the criminal both the money and watch would have been gone.

"You didn't dare take his watch did you?" demanded the sheriff.

France didn't answer. He said later that for the first time he realized that he could be suspected. There was no telling how closely the murderer had stood when the fatal shot was fired for the victim's face was blackened and burned. Only one end of the bunk was burned, and it was quite evident Cotten had been lying down when shot. But how had he got out of the bunk and on the floor

The fire had started in the big pile of dry wood and kindling behind the newly bought stove. All the dry wood had burned thoroughly, but the green cottonwood logs had stopped the fire.

The sheriff asked why only one man had gone for supplies when it was always a two-man job. France said Cotten was tired after the hard work on the roof.

Said the sheriff, "Why did you wait so late to go "

"Because I thought Jim would feel more like going with me later on—but he didn't," said France.

"Who besides you knew Cotton had all that money "

"No one that I know of."

"Did you really stay in Hebron last night "

"Yes, I slept in the hay at the stable yard."

"Who saw you?"

"No one, I had started back here first, and found I was pretty tired, so turned back and stayed in Hebron."

The coroner suggested that perhaps France had better go to Rensselaer with the sheriff. At first France agreed, but some of the men who had come with him from Hebron suggested that he had better not.

"Maybe I'd better arrest you," said the sheriff.

One of the Hebron men said, "If France had done this, he'd have known the new logs were green and wouldn't burn—and besides, if France had wanted to rob his partner he could have done so before they spent all that money for the new cabin."

"Maybe France wanted to get the cabin too."

"Well," said the Hebron man, "If he did, why did he try to burn it down?"

"There wasn't no hole where the bullet came out," commented the coroner, "musta been fired from a distance."

"It takes a good shot to get a man right between the eyes from that doorway," said the driver.

Without comment, France went to his clothes box and got his gun and gave it to the sheriff. It had a full chamber and didn't smell as though it had been recently fired.

"Where's Cotton's gun" asked the sheriff.

"In his box."

They looked. The clothes were roughly disturbed and the gun was gone.

"A stranger, drifting along the river, wouldn't know there was a cabin here would he?" said the sheriff.

"Then it must have been someone who knew them, and knew Cotton was alone."

"Well, if France did it, he would have brought in enough wood to burn the whole thing down," said someone.

"Or," commented the sheriff, "he just wanted to burn the evidence and save most of the cabin."

"I didn't do it and I'll be right in Hebron if you want me," said France.

And today, the story is just as much unfinished as it was then. Nothing further was ever done. France quit trapping, for he knew that it was Cotten's genius with traps that had made their success possible. France was only an "assistant" when it came to setting traps and out-guessing the game.

He finally drifted out of the country.



*Ruins of a Trapper's Cabin on Grape Island where  
James Cotton was murdered and burned  
February 7, 1877*

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STORY OF SNAKE ISLAND

The story of Snake Island is partially authenticated, but it's almost too weird to be accepted as factual. Snake Island was originally a high and dry spot of some ten or twelve acres in extent on the Kankakee—Lake Michigan Trail. As its name indicated, it was the place where hundreds of snakes went to bask in the warm sunshine. It was the unmolested home of an aged Shawnee squaw, the same squaw who is believed to have adopted the crippled Captain Atwood. In later years, it was the site of one of the first brick school houses in Porter County and is today the site of a large group of extremely modern farm buildings. To tell the story of Snake Island, we must turn to the book, "Pioneer Hunters of the Kankakee" by the late Lorenzo Werich.

The aged Indian woman is designated in history only as the name "The Old Shawnee Squaw". From 1804 to 1811 she ranged up and down the old Lak-ro-River Trails, from the Tippecanoe to the Calumet, slightly "touched" slightly wild, fantastically arrayed in the most picturesque of Indian made apparel, scrupulously clean and precise in everything she did. She was regarded with a sort of superstition and awe by the Indians. She was midwife, medicine woman, sorceress, and sage all rolled into one, but she was utterly unbalanced because of a lost son. None of the Shawnees, even that remnant of the tribe which was aged, infirm, or youthful could ever tell how or when the Old Shawnee Squaw lost a son. All that is known of her is that she peered closely into the face of every young man, either Indian or white, then shook her head and passed on.

The water moccasins and the rattlers on Snake Island apparently ignored her as they did the occasional deer or racoon or other animal that shared the island with them. She had a corn patch, a potato field, and a pumpkin-growing area on the island to which she tended religiously. She set bird, snake, and muskrat traps, and caught fish, which she dried and ground up into a powder for winter. She knew where the blueberries, cranberries, and wild plums were the thickest. Her wigwam was of the round-topped, bark-covered type of the Potawattomies rather than that of the Shawnees. Her wigwam was known all along the trail from the Kankakee to the Big Timber. She knew the seasonal variations in the Kankakee and the places it could be forded under any conditions. She knew where the snow was safe and crusted through in the Big Timber; she knew the varying trails through The Pines, and the accessibility of the Ft. Creek Trail and the Old Sac Trail. She knew and advised the passing Indians without being at the scene. She was everything from herb doctor to bone-setter and marsh guide. She warned against the Prophet and against Tecumseh. From the first, she advocated a peaceful co-existence with the incoming

whites, whom she described as being "as many as the sands of the sea".

When the Battle of Tippecanoe was imminent, it was Old Shawnee Squaw who went to the battleground area and advised the removal of the non-combatants to the Kankakee. After the battle, when a subdued and disconsolate group of warriors came to get the band of children, women and the aged, it was she who sent them on to Clear Lake where they found disused shelter, fuel, and food.

It was at the Tippecanoe battlefield on the morning after the redmen's disastrous defeat, that the Old Shawnee Squaw appeared on the scene, wandering wrath-like in the dim and slowly approaching dawn.

In a labyrinth of fallen timbers, probably originally Indian-made traps for the expected white soldiers, she found an unconscious soldier in a captain's uniform, small, dark, and perhaps somewhat Indian-like in appearance. She stooped down, studied the man a moment and then carefully extracted him from the trap. His leg was broken in two places and his left hand almost crushed. She removed his uniform, using strips of it for bandages. With twigs and branches she set the broken leg, bandaged the crushed hand, and administered some herbs. She carefully buried all the man's equipment, his uniform, belt, cap, and rifle—everything—and then she picked him up and wended her way northward to the Kankakee.

There is another part of the story. Daniel Scott, a trapper on the Kankakee, told it like this:

On November 7, 1811, Captain John Atwood disappeared from the Tippecanoe Battlefield as though the earth had swallowed him. Yet, only a few hours before, he had received and transmitted to his troops General Harrison's order to withdraw from the center and attack from the right flank, avoiding a possible encirclement by the Indians. From the time his company turned eastward, Capt. Atwood was never seen again.

Atwood may have been part Indian. He certainly looked it with his brownish complexion although he denied it. He was one of the younger officers, but had been made a captain on the field only the day before because of his alertness.

He had fired the first shot at the Battle of Tippecanoe during a misty and moonlight night. He and his cousin, Mike Haskins, were on picket duty. The Indians had just been supplied with new guns, presumably from the British. About three o'clock on the morning of November 7, the Prophet's forces were attempting a sneak attack to open the long threatened battle. They were crawling silently through the underbrush as the army slept. Atwood saw something glisten in the brush and silently motioned to Haskins, who quickly raised his gun and fired. He killed an Indian, who gave one unearthly shriek before expiring, immediately alerting the whole battlefield. The surprise had

failed. The Indians came on in a wild mass of screaming, red-skinned humanity, only to be systematically and coolly mowed down by Governor Garrison's alerted forces. By nightfall on November 7, the Indians were defeated, and immediately abandoned their villages, streaking out to the north, south, east, or west as the soldiers started a careful cleanup. One group of Shawnees, on the north side of the battleground, made their way northward, going to the Kankakee, where they had hidden their families.

At roll call, Captain Atwood was missed. A search was quickly started and friendly Indians interviewed. Some were sent to overtake the northbound Shawnees to see if by chance they held him captive. One injured Indian reluctantly said, "White Captain, he got broken leg." Further than that nothing was learned—and that was discounted. The affair became a battlefield mystery. If he had been injured, he should have been found. If he had been killed, a body should be some place. All retreating Indian bands were contacted by friendly Indians and they all came back with the same story. No white captain. There was, according to the military records, a careful search for possible battlefield burial places.

Some time later—no one knows how soon—there was a rumor that a lame man was being cared for by an Indian woman at Tassinong. But a careful check of that area failed to bring any information to light. Still later, the War Department received, from some unknown source, a statement that a white man was living at "Deep Mud", an Indian village that once occupied the present townsite of Wanatah. Like all other leads this too, faded out.

Daniel Scott, who told the story, was, like Mike Haskins, also a cousin of the lost captain. He, too, conducted an investigation, having come back west from New York long after the Dearborn Massacre had occurred. Mike Haskins also came. They were sent to Indiana to search for the missing man because a large estate was involved. They remained here until 1820, having come well prepared. Scott brought a large stock of traders' goods and opened a trading station at Tassinong. He was generous with all the Indians and made friends. He asked many questions until the missing Capt. Atwood became the subject of many an Indian village discussion. Mike Haskins, equipped with traps and supplies, bought an island in the Kankakee and established himself as a typical trapper. He covered all the territory from English Lake to Momence—without result.

Scott's store on the old Pottawattomie Trail, which stood exactly where Charles Anderson's garage is today, brought him face to face with many Indians. He asked questions and offered rewards for several years, all to no purpose. In 1821, when the time factor permitted the Atwood estate to be administrated, Scott and Haskins returned East.

The story, without embellishment, was told to old John Werich in 1833 by an old and talkative English-speaking Indian who lived on Bissell Ridge.

Old, John, in turn, told the story to his son, who, in later years wrote of the affair in his book on the Kankakee.

The only available military record says of Capt. Atwood, "Missing in Action".

It was in 1818 when the first Quakers were enroute to the Illinois prairies. They stopped off a few years in the Big Timber country, pending the settling down of the Indians after the Ft. Dearborn Massacre. Someone of their number began to put two and two together and finally came to the conclusion that the crippled, retiring Indian, and his "Mother" who occupied Snake Island, might have been the missing soldier. Whatever became of either of them is unknown. When the Pottawatomies were moved to the Kansas Reservation in 1834, all trace of the old squaw and her lame son were lost.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE STORY OF BOGUS ISLAND

Another story that appears in Kankakee River history records repeatedly and was written into the official records of several river counties is that of Bogus Island.

Bogus Island on the Kankakee was named by some of the old timers because it was supposed to be and actually was, it was afterward learned—the hideout for an organized band of counterfeiters who made their bogus money there. Then they went up to the little village of Pine in Lake County, one by one, and edged their way into Chicago, with a gunny sack of “wearing apparel” in the folds of which were sheaves of fraudulent bank notes. These counterfeit notes were usually made up in the form of private bank issues, mostly on some non-existent bank.

Three or four of the gang would cover the country with this fake money, always buying some item of much less value so they would get a large amount of change with their purchase. Guns, ammunition, traps, clothing, food of any kind that was dried or preserved in some manner, pipes and tobacco—anything they might use was purchased. As soon as they had accumulated all the stuff they could carry and had disposed of their last counterfeit bill, they'd slip back to the Kankakee. They lived uselessly and lazily in their Bogus Island resort, enjoying the best of everything that had been available at the general stores in the area, and dressing in the heaviest and warmest clothing in winter.

In his book, “The Wonders of the Dunes”, George Brennan said: Father's brother, Sheriff S. M. Brennan of LaPorte County, traveled through the country many times in the early days. He was a big, fearless man with a group of deputies of the same type. They aided greatly in cleaning the criminals out, although the audacity of the counterfeiters in those days was phenomenal in its boldness. In many cases we found they were in collusion with leading citizens and village bankers. Those presumably respectable business men would buy up batches of this spurious paper and pass it on to their depositors in lieu of the good money that had been deposited with them.

One of the things that eventually brought about the capture of this gang at Bogus Island was the discovery of their hidden plates by Karl Seymour. He was setting a trap at an old muskrat house in the bayou, said Lorenzo Werich, when he struck something hard and it sounded hollow like a metal box, so he removed the top of the muskrat house and found a small iron box. It contained a counterfeiting outfit—tools, dyes, plates, and lead sheets.

The find was turned over to the authorities and is even yet on display in some museum that specializes in counterfeit in Kankakee exhibits.

After the counterfeit gang had been scattered and its leader, a man by the name of Murrell, sent to prison, and the others either jailed or hounded

out of the country, there was a careful checking of all suspicious characters. Of the band that the local trappers and store keepers could remember, there were always two missing and unaccounted for. The few suspects who presumably entered honest employment and who were not arrested because the officers couldn't get convicting evidence, were watched pretty closely. Then there were the known members in jails or prisons—ten were duly accounted for—but there were always supposed to have been twelve in the gang. One thing was very sure, none of those in custody was skillful enough to have engraved the plates, so authorities assumed that the two missing men had been the actual engravers.

One day a hunter by the name of Beeler had some dogs that ran a fox into a hole on Bogus Island. In digging it out, the hunter dug up the remains of two men—two white men—that even in their almost unrecognizable condition, answered the description of the missing two, thus, the case was marked closed.

A counterfeiter of silver coins was arrested at Possey's Island some time later. Of all the people who wrote of the Kankakee, there was none who wrote so entertainingly as the famed Duneland artist, Earl Reed. He had an immediate contact with many of the bewhiskered eccentric characters who lived in the marshlands. In his book, "Tales of a Vanishing River," under the title of 'His Unlucky Star' he tells of this coin counterfeiter. He wrote: "I was standing on the bridge one moonlight night, looking upon the glories of the moon and the afterglow when I heard a light footfall behind me."

"Excuse me, mister, have you got a match?"

"I turned and saw an odd looking little man about fifty with ginger hair and beard. He dropped a well-filled sack and approached deferentially."

"As I produced a match, he produced a stub of a pipe and started feeling in his pockets—'I don't seem to have any tobacco with me,' he said, so I gave him a cigar; he tore the end off and started stuffing it in his pipe.

"My name's Erastus Wattles," he offered. "My place is two miles down the river. I've been gathering snake root. I send lots of roots to a big drug firm back East—every week I get off one or two shipments .

I nodded an acknowledgement of the information and said, "That's a nice reflection—that picture spread out on the water."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE STORY OF BENJAMIN J. GIFFORD

Benjamin J. Gifford needs no monument to say that he once lived, said Rev. T. H. Ball. He has done more than anyone else to develop the resources of the Kankakee Valley. Starting as a poor boy, born on a farm in Kendall County, Illinois, in pioneer days, he was left motherless at the age of six. At eleven he arranged to buy some prairie land from the government at \$1.25 an acre with the kindly backing of a relative. His father disapproved, so the plan was dropped but, at this writing in 1900, that same land is worth \$125.00 an acre.

Ben was a small boy, with no money, and only the few clothes which he wore, but he soon realized he had to make his own way. He worked summers to permit his attending school in winter, and at the age of seventeen, had qualified as a country school teacher. He served in the Civil War, returning with the rank of captain. He took up the study of law and finally settled in Rantoul, as an attorney.

He organized the Rantoul, Havana & Eastern Ry. Having built a road from LeRoy to West Lebanon, he sold out at a premium to Jay Gould.

Later he became a member of the syndicate that took over the Cleveland and Marietta Ry., and was its manager until it was sold. He made money! In 1884 he began the purchase of Kankakee Valley marsh lands, and soon had seventy-five hundred acres which he drained. He built tenant houses for the employees, and upon completion of the enterprise, sold the land out in tracts on which he advised the purchasers to grow onions.

In July 1891, he purchased a Jasper County tract of 6,700 acres from Thompson Bros. of Rensselaer, to which he soon added other tracts for which he paid an average price of \$4.50 an acre. When he had obtained thirty-five thousand acres, he started another drainage project. He bought and installed two gigantic dredges which were kept working night and day until he had made over a hundred miles of ditches.

He began selling tracts in 1896, recommending the growing of onions, which, on that reclaimed marsh land, produced 500 to 700 bushels an acre. He figured the cost of producing an acre of onions at 50 cents, thus, the profit was stupendous—except for the excessive cost of shipping to Chicago. The railroads had a differential arrangement which made freight rates unreasonable. He built two hundred houses and barns for the tenants and encouraged them to buy the land.

In 1899 the reclaimed lands produced 300,000 bushels of corn, 200,000 bushels of oats, 150,000 bushels of onions, 50,000 bushels of potatoes, and promised greater yields in each subsequent year.

He advised the railroads firmly but gently that unless they readjusted their rates, he'd build a railroad himself—and they laughed at him! He immediately organized the Wabash Valley and Chicago Ry., and hired a locating engineer by the name of Clifton Hobbs to select the right-of-way.

The route was from Kersey to DeMotte, or rather, to a point about 2 and a half miles east of DeMotte, and then by the villages of Laura, Guilford, Comer, Lewiston, and Pleasant Grove. At Dinwiddie a town had been laid out and an elevator built. As fast as the road was completed, it was put into operation. In 1900, with eighteen miles operating daily, the other railroads began to sit up and take notice. Their scouts, hoping to find an adverse financial situation which would permit them to take over the obligations, were astonished to find that every foot of his road was paid for already. There was no indebtedness, so they began to talk about buying the road. They reduced the freight rates on the produce. Soon the Gifford Railroad became known as the Onion Route.

The amount of freight carried by the new road was almost unbelievable even though it had to be wagon-hauled from the end of the line to South Water Street. Soon Chicago began to recognize the Kankakee Valley as the truck-garden area of Chicagoland.

Ben Gifford took the unproductive acres of the swamps, drained them, and brought them into cultivation. Where only a few years ago water was standing and muskrats the sole inhabitants, there are now homes for thousands. During the construction period, employment was provided for thousands of men, none of whom ever failed to get a full day's pay for a full day's work and get it promptly.

Ben Gifford, with a couple of dredge boats and an old locomotive, made the Kankakee marshes available to the city of Chicago for gardening purposes. Coupled with the Bourbonais—St. Anne area, this Gifford tract is now the supplier for a large part of the produce consumed in Chicago. Land that once was sold at a hundred dollars an acre is now available at any price, unless in the settling of an estate—and in such cases, neighbors grab up the land at once.

When Ben Gifford passed away, his estate sold the line to the Monon. The Onion Line was continued until new and better routes were provided. With the death of Ben Gifford, Mr. Hobbs, his long-time engineer, entered the banking field and became the president of the Hebron State Bank.

The town of Dinwiddie is now only a wide place in the road, but the old grade from which the rails have long been taken for other construction is still visible along the highway. A sign that Ben Gifford "went thatta way" fifty years ago.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE STORY OF FRENCH ISLAND

"I was born in a log cabin on my grandfather's farm near Valparaiso in 1860," says Lorenzo Werich.

It was within two and a half miles of the historical Kankakee. When I was about eight years old, we moved to the marsh and lived in another log cabin on Bissel Ridge. In the summer my father ditched and made hay. The tall swamp grass was cut with a scythe. In the fall, father trapped and shot game for meat.

A few yards in front of our house ran a small creek, spreading out into a slough just beyond our house and forming a great muskrat pond. After two and a half years we moved to French Island where I spent the next ten years of my life.

The lofty sycamores and the mammoth elms were still there as they had been when the French drifted down the river.

The Spanish always named and mapped everything—not so with the French—and for this reason, many notable French exploits have never been written in history. The French long held the ascendancy in this region and were held in high regard by the Indians.

In 1821, white hunters came into the Kankakee area. The French had long ago established a trading post at Tassinong, even before the Pottawattomie revolt. After the arrival of the white hunters came the white settlers. The first to settle on the island was a French trader named LaBonta. Soon two or three other French families came to settle on the island and it thus derived its name of French Island. What it was before that I do not know.

Only one Indian lived on the island. He was named Sheubana and was related to Peashaway from English Lake. Sheubana lived with his squaw and two orphaned grandchildren in a small wigwam. One day we passed the place and found the squaw and children in great distress. Sheubana had gone down the river to hunt and had been gone over three days. He was to have been away only one day as they were hungry and without meat.

We got together a bunch and started out to find him, and before long we found him caught in a 'split tree trap' where he had been in the heavy rain, cold night, and bitter wind.

We got him out, made a stretcher, and took him home. We also killed a deer which we took with us to his wigwam. We had liniments, salves, sticking plaster, and such stuff as trappers carry. We left them and the meat. Soon he got well and died many years later way up at the headwaters.

It was on this island they dug up the counterfeiting outfit; also it was here the two mysterious skeletons were found. The body of old

John Drago was found. John had been murdered by Web Warteno, and for which crime Web paid on the scaffold.

In the fall of 1847, Heck and John Goodridge came to the island and built a regular trapper's shanty. So now we have the first hunter, the first settler, and the first commercial trapper.

It was long after this that we moved there. The hunters and trappers that had gone to the Civil War had come back, and the whole country was beginning to settle up.

When the saw mills came in, boats were soon on the river. Gradually, the big city people built hunting lodges along the river. Later, the big ditching machines came in and thus we saw the gradual conversion of the finest hunting ground in the northwest to farms.

There were several of these islands along the south border of the Kankakee River in Porter County and on each of them just as much history has taken place as did on French Island, but as it was here I lived so long, I, of course, remember its history best.

## CHAPTER XVII

### AN INDIAN BRUNNEHILDE

Shadbonna was one of the Pottawattomies who actually tried to live up to his obligation. His name appears on several important Porter county transactions. He was a chief with a permanent location on Indian Island on the Kankakee near Hebron. His name appears on some of the Pottawattomie treaties as well as on local transactions. He knew the red men were on the verge of removal because of their attacks on the whites and because of their devolved allegiance to their own nations, the British and the Americans.

Like all far-seeing individuals, he was frequently condemned by his own people. He was opposed to the Prophet, but like the Prophet, he was a commanding presence at the council fires. He opposed Main Poc's massacre at Ft. Dearborn, but he and the older Indians, who constituted his following, were unable to control the vicious young bucks. Even though he was considered something of a sage along the Kankakee, his squaw Ursula was the greater influence among the tribe that occupied Indiantown, where Hebron is located today.

Ursa Shedbonna was a tall, stately woman, almost as dignified as the chief himself. They lived together for over forty years, and as a couple, they were conspicuous, progressive, and honored. There have been several volumes written about Shadbonna, but only one known article about Ursula—written by Frances Howe in 1900. She said:

Ursa Shedbonna possessed a grand presence. She looked every inch a queen. She was the only full-blooded Indian I ever saw. Her skin was like copper with a dulled finish. Not one atom of white blood was recorded in her ancestry. Not one feature and not one outline of her body departed from the perfect type of her race. Tall and portly, her commanding figure made a fitting monument to a lost dynasty.

Many who saw her in Westchester Township thought she was my grandmother, Marie Bailly. She dressed gorgeously in a costume having very little resemblance to the sedate grays, browns, and black worn by grandmother. Ursula's apparel was as distinctly pagan as grandmother's was quiet and reserved. Ursula's was truly barbaric in style. She most frequently wore a bright calico shirt, cut very low around the neck with wide, short, open sleeves. Her broad expanse of neck and chest was not covered Quaker style with a folded kerchief, as most Indian women wore when visiting. Ursula's neck and chest were always decorated with lavish necklaces and broaches — really valuable pieces — and all worn at the same time. A huge brooch of hammered silver — several inches in diameter — held her shirt together at the throat. Her ears carried silver bobs. A broadcloth, kilt-like skirt was draped around her in a way grandmother said was more graceful than modest. Ursula's 'cloak' was a scarlet blanket of the kind the British shipped to Malden for

trading purposes. It probably cost thirty beaver hides. Her hair was coarse and black and as thick as a horse's tail. She wore it in a doubled-up braid with a silver ornament and a red ribbon — a small one — at the end. Always she dressed exactly the same.

She was somewhat masculine in stride and stature, and, of course, she made a very picturesque appearance with our grand old forest for a background. She was like the blast of a Wagnerian trumpet, arrayed in all her glory whenever she and Shadbonna came up from the Kankakee to visit us. I am sure she always knew she was being mistaken for Marie Bailly as they strode firmly along the path toward our home on the Calumet.

During the three years we were in Europe — with the balance of the family at Mackinaw—I am sure both Ursa and Shadbonna slept on the front porch, rolled up in their blankets—for they were seen by visitors—but at that time they were both old, gray, and growing somewhat infirm. She didn't make nearly as picturesque a presentation as she had in earlier days.

Although I am devoting this part of the story mainly to Ursa, I must tell of another incident. Long after all the Indians had gone west, this pair maintained a cabin along the Kankakee where Shadbonna trapped and hunted. The two boys, Kesis Shadbonna and Lemis Shadbonna, each of whom had a section of reserve land around White Flint Lake, sold out at some insignificant figure and had followed the tribe to the West. Ursa was an Ottawa, and as I have said, Shadbonna was a Pottawattomie chief. The two boys—really grown men—had therefore a horde of relatives from both sides of the family. They felt more at home with them in the West than with their parents, who had decided to remain here with the whites.

Shadbonna used a split-log trap for the bigger game. One cold, fall evening he somehow got caught in his own trap near the lower ford. He almost perished there—held in that great vise—until two white trappers from Indiantown happened to pass the cabin. Ursa voiced her fears and the two whites went out in search of the aged Indian. They found him almost unconscious. They made a litter and carried him back to his cabin. They also gave Ursa and their grandchildren half of a venison and a part of their supplies. When they reported the incident to the authorities, a movement was started by some citizens here and in Chicago to buy a cottage near Grundy, Illinois, for the aged couple. There they lived their remaining years—but it was during the period of 1810 to 1850 that they were in the height of their glory.

On December 17, 1836, the day after grandfather died, they came to the Bailly home. How they ever knew of grandfather's death is a mystery. They came and sat silently in the little log cabin beside the big house all during the day of the funeral. After the other visitors had departed, they accompanied grandmother to the cemetery for a final farewell. I was told that they both stood tall and straight with

folded arms beside the tomb, looking neither to right nor left as my little grandmother said her prayers for her husband.

I think Ursa was some relation to grandmother for we all called her Aunt Ura, but that doesn't mean they really were related—for we all called the older folks Uncle and Aunt. Joseph Morgan was Uncle Joe to all of us all the time.

Ursa was indeed a character to fit the ride of the Valkyrie. She spoke some English and some French. She was firmly opposed to the lack of moral laws among the younger Indian women of the time—and she was also opposed to the Indians selling their reserves at some insignificant figure to unscrupulous whites.

Whenever this pair came to visit us, grandmother would frequently go to their cabin and talk over old times with them. Ursa never acted nor posed—and all her accumulated wealth of necklaces and broaches was not out of place on her. She took them with her wherever she went. She knew value from tinsel and silver from trade goods.

Within the folds of her skirt, she always carried a keen-edged dagger—and with it she had slit many a deer's throat. She wore heavy buck-skin leggings and moccasins of her own make. These were never ornamented. Her wearing apparel, even though flamboyant, was made for good hard use—and so was she. From 1860, when I was about ten years old, until 1867, Ursa Shadbonna was a conspicuous part of my childhood—but, of course, most of the things I have written of this Indian Brunnehilde came from mother and grandmother.

according to N. Watson

July 17, 1859 Shaubena died, 84 years of age  
at his residence on the Illinois  
River

Nov 30, 1864 Mo-o-met ze-be-qua his  
squaw, together with Mary  
Oquaka, 4 yrs old were  
drowned in Mazon creek.  
p 268-269

## CHAPTER XVIII

Many were the harrowing experiences of the early settlers along the Kankakee. Perhaps one or two gathered from the collection possessed by Old Timers will give a word picture of the Kankakee Valley conditions as early as 1847. There was a family named Wells—Henry Wells, with his wife and four children—who came from Madison, in the Indiana settlement, enroute by Robinson's Prairie in Lake County. According to the instructions sent by Solon Robinson, who had settled at the site that later became Crown Point, they came in early December when the ground was frozen and the flies and mosquitoes non-existent.

They made it well enough until they got to Eaton's Ferry across the river in Jasper County. That night they experienced an awful cold wave—something seldom recorded for that early in the season. Their oxen turned their heads toward the wagon box on the leeward side. Within the wagon the whole party huddled together under all their blankets and still shivered with the cold. Fortunately, the canvas sides of the wagon cover had gotten partly wet during the last part of the journey, and with this cold wave, those canvas sides became unyielding, solid walls. They made a good wind-break with no billowing and snapping in the ice-laden north wind. Unable to endure the continually falling mercury, Mr. Wells bundled himself up and somehow gathered some dry driftwood along the banks and built a fire at each end of the covered wagon. It kept the family from freezing. They chewed some hard, uncooked food of some kind and managed to exist through the night.

With the sunrise, the temperature began climbing, and within a few hours, the cold was more endurable. The family got some sort of a breakfast, and the patient oxen, seemingly none the worse for their experience, munched their hay contentedly. For miles in all directions, the swamp was a frozen sheet of ice, except along the Jasper County ridge where there was a wind-swept bare pathway. For the next several miles, the party traveled in a comparatively safe area, but when the time came to cross the river to head for the Robinson Prairie, they experienced a new difficulty.

No one had ever told them that oxen cannot travel on smooth ice, and as the outfit entered on the ice-covered crossing, the oxen fell. It was with great exertion that they were helped to their feet—only to fall again and again. By nightfall they were too exhausted to make any effort to get up. Finally, Mr. Wells spread some hay, blankets, and a bit of hard-to-obtain unfrozen soil on a small area and got the animals again on their feet. He unhooked them, turning their heads to the protecting wagon-cover.

With the coming of another night, the temperature sank even lower than the night before. They had no adequate shelter, insufficient blankets, and no fuel. It was possible that they might freeze. Frantically Wells and the older boy ran from hummock to hummock hoping to find something to burn, but there was nothing. There was a small amount of hay in the

wagon which they thought they might burn slowly close to the end of the wagon. The whole family was utterly exhausted and hungry. Their work with the continually falling oxen had worn them all out and the children were whimpering with cold, fear, and hunger. In desperation, Wells walked further away from the wagon—and suddenly gave a jubilant shout. He had found a pile of newly peeled and dried logs on an island, all ready for the construction of a cabin.

They spread the hay across the end of the wagon and hooked the oxen there. Then they all struggled over the ice to the pile of logs which Wells had used to build a roaring fire. There they spend the night, cold but still alive, which was more than they had expected. Somehow the night passed and another day dawned. At the wagon the oxen were quietly pulling mouthfuls of hay from the wagon box. The ice under the animals was covered with dropped wisps of hay which had frozen into the ice, giving the oxen a safer footing. The ice embedded hay gave the party an idea. They spread a dual pathway of hay across the ice. With the water bucket, they carried water from a hastily opened hole in the ice and wet the hay down—it froze in a few minutes. After they had hooked the oxen to the wagon again, the outfit was able to cross the great expanse of ice and get to rough ground again.

All forenoon they plugged along. Most of the time the passengers were forced to get out and walk to keep warm. A brief stop was made for a hastily prepared meal, consisting mainly of corn bread and a pot of beef stew, which Mrs. Wells had thawed out somewhat. The cattle being fed and watered, they started on again. As they entered Eagle Township, at the junction of Eagle Creek and the Kankakee, they saw a white sign conspicuously tacked to a tree. It contained a crudely drawn but unmistakable pointing finger. Below the illustration were the words: "*Fifteen miles to Solon Robinsons*". Every few miles along the way they found additional signs. Soon, the weather began to warm up.

They arrived that evening. But never during the lifetime of Mr. or Mrs. Wells did they forget those icy nights on the river when only prayer and hope stood between them and death.

## CHAPTER XIX

Desperadoes, equal to those of the West, once occupied hide-outs along the Kankakee. Perhaps the best known was one who used the name of Mike Shaffer. He was apparently a highwayman who worked alone. His headquarters was the Momence of 100 years ago. His story has several versions, probably each one partly true. The tales dealt with different episodes in the life of the community—and with the crimes of this character who was accredited with the ruthless murder of numerous travelers. One story will be sufficient to give a picture of the man and his time.

Mike Shaffer's nail keg, full of gold coins, has never been discovered. It has been the subject of the most prominent "buried treasure tales" along the river since 1869. That was the year Mike antagonized the wrong man some place just over the Indiana-Illinois state line, near the pioneer village of Momence, Illinois—now a city of about five thousand.

There were dozens of probable places the highwayman could have buried his "ill-gotten gains", but there is only one thing certain. As far as the public knows, that treasure has never been found. There have been ditching machines, dredges, rock blasting crews, steam shovels, and gigantic dippers working all along the river since Mike was killed; and there have been curious old-timers following the machines day after day, watching for that mysterious nail keg jammed full of gold coins.

The yard at the Shaffer house, the barn-yard and the feed lot, the hidden pathways, and the few rises in the ground where the spring floods never reached, have all been gone over by treasure-seekers, with no result—at least with no known result. There were suspicions that certain possessors of sudden wealth may have found the treasure—but since the keg contained only gold coins—according to the tale—that assumption has been discarded. The buried gold still exists within its unknown hiding place.

Mike Shaffer was first seen in Newton County, where he had a trapper's shanty. He was known as Bill Schaft. Later, when he moved over to Lake County in Indiana, he was known as William Shafter. Some time later, he appeared at Hebron where he gave his name as Mike Shaffer. One of the trappers there remarked: "Guess he's finally settled on a name." No one along the river believed that any of the names he had offered were his right names. In fact, the discarding of a name and the adoption of a new one was quite a commonplace incident among the men along the Kankakee. Especially was this so in the Bever Lake region where a group of lawless characters had secret hide-outs. They were assumed to be highwaymen, horse-thieves, counterfeitors, and bank robbers.

Mike Shaffer was known to possess a hide-out in the Bogus Island area and one near the village of Momence. He had a wife and daughter once upon a time, but both had died—some neighbors had accused Mike of the death of both. A newspaper woman named Fay Folsom Nichols wrote:

Mike Shaffer was a knife-wielding bandit. He could throw a knife with deadly accuracy. He was the self-appointed head of a band of cut-throats along the river, centering at Momence. He was a ruthless, cruel giant of a man, and according to Burt Borrough of Momence, he was said to always carefully draw the weapon from his victim's body, and wipe it off on the unfortunate's clothing before searching for the moneybelt.

He was never known to carry a gun—he said he didn't like the noise. Among his criminal abilities was that of being able to disguise a stolen horse so the owner would hardly know it. He knew how to create a bleached out "star" on a roan's head or white "stockings" on a bay. He could dye most distinguishing marks on a horse's coat.

When travelers westward-bound came around the end of Lake Michigan, wearing a pretentious looking outfit, they were apt to be waylaid by the knife-throwing highwayman and his associates. Many teams, wagons, and a world of "supplies" accumulated at various hang-outs along the Kankakee. The stuff was mostly taken into Chicago where the highwaymen had an outlet for practically everything they brought in. Dozens of unexplained "bodies" have been dug up during the past century, most frequently from swamps. They were most frequently attributed to the notorious Mike Shaffer and his "gang".

Mike Shaffer was never known to spend a gold piece said a Momence writer. Of his always plentiful funds, he only spent the currency and the small coins. Sometimes after a poker game, he'd exchange his handful of small coins and bills for a gold coin at the local bar. Once in the days of the first shipping in of nail kegs, he got a keg from a construction crew. So the rumor began—and is still believed—that he kept his hoard of gold in that iron-bound keg buried in the area of his home.

But Mike Shaffer never lived to enjoy his wealth. He had been accused of poisoning his neighbors' horses if he had suspected that the neighbors were talking about his activities. Many an honest citizen who dared to object to Shaffer's presence in the village found his winter supplies burned—as well as his cabin and his wagon. It was logically assumed that all those who suffered these losses were men who objected to harboring in Momence this brutal highwayman. But one day Mike picked on the wrong man. A certain building was burned one night—and within a few moments after the quickly gathered group of citizens had departed—Mike Shaffer was met at his own door step by the owner of the destroyed building. Met by a blast from a shot-gun, he was killed.

The citizens of Momence dug a shallow grave and dumped Mike into it. The only words said at the grave were: "That's where you should have been years ago", and they slapped their shovels down on the newly dug earth with vindictive blows.

A few days later a chance passer-by remarked that the grave had sunk considerably. It wasn't long before a Momence physician had a well-cleaned skeleton in his closet.

Meanwhile, the rumored nail keg, with its golden treasure, was the object of much nearby digging. A trapper named Milo Smith and one named Bill Finn suddenly decided to build a couple of structures at their sites along the river. Some people guessed that maybe they'd found the money—but no one ever knew of either of them to spend a gold coin at any of the river stores nor to pay a carpenter in gold. There was also an individual named Jim Loomis, who also was “guessed” at having gotten the buried gold. He did spend a gold piece now and then—but the guesses came to nothing. To this day, the Mike Shaffer treasure has been searched for by perhaps as many as have dug for Captain Kidd's gold.

## CHAPTER XX

"It is with considerable local pride," said Lorenzo Werich, "that the various settlements along the Kankakee point out how they frequently entertained various prominent personages during the hey-day of the hunting period on the river. The list is long and impressive. During my youth, the Jasper County and Porter County sections of the Kankakee were hosts to Gov. Harrison, Gen. Lew Wallace, Whitcomb Riley, Maurice Thompson, and many others."

Over in Lake County there were a number of Englishmen who came for two or three years in succession, finally building a very elaborate hunting lodge, farm house, and a number of stables. There has always been a mystery about these members of the British nobility, who very abruptly dropped out of the picture, sacrificing all their investment.

The names known were Captain Jerome Blake, William Parker, and his son, Thomas Parker. I think I heared they came originally from Cumberland County on the Irish Sea and selected this far away site as a safe place for certain titled Britishers to "get away from it all", once in a while.

The structures were very elaborate and commodious. The Club House would have done credit to a great English estate. The employee's quarters, the barns, the stables, and all the other buildings were about as one would expect to have been built as a "Hunting Estate" in Bengal or British Africa. The whole establishment was called "Cumberland" and the employee's houses were at Camp Mulligan. The whole community of buildings was built on School Grove Island on the Kankakee in Lake County, Indiana.

As soon as the buildings were ready for occupancy, a local resident named G. W. Shaver, with his wife, was installed as caretaker. Soon, there were shipped to "The Cumberland Lodge", sixteen choice hunting dogs, some being for deer hunting, some for prairie chickens, and some for cata-mounts.

There were also shipped to the estate a number of Alderny cows, some fine horses, a black bear on a chain, and a number of foxes. Captain Blake told Rev. Ball, a preacher at Crown Point, Indiana, that the English gentlemen intended to combine business with pleasure—to have all the necessary equipment for hunting, fishing, and for entertaining a goodly number of foreign guests, and at the same time develop a fine farm as a business enterprise. This was in 1872.

As soon as the whole establishment was operating, ready for guests, and staffed by various employees, Capt. Blake and the two Parkers abruptly departed without any explanation. One day they were at the lodge, getting everything in readiness for the first group of visitors, and the next day they were gone. Carrying little baggage, they had ordered a livery team and carriage and had been driven to Chicago. The livery employee said he had "dropped them at the railroad station", had accepted his pay, and had

turned back—while the trio apparently entered the depot to await a train.

There was an unexplained period of silence. Then from Chicago a letter came to Crown Point addressed to Mr. Shaver at Cumberland Lodge. It simply stated, "The Cumberland property is to be sold. Your remaining wages will be paid from the proceeds of the sale. Further details later."

Of the whole affair there were three stories told. The first: a Chicagoan had said the three gentlemen from England had been lost at sea. Just where this tale originated is unknown. Later, through the office of a local attorney, there came a statement saying that the three men—the two Parkers and Capt. Blake—were in reality only promoters, who had sold shares in this grand estate all through London and had disappeared with vast sums.

There was another story, perhaps the true one. During this period there was a depression sweeping the British Isles and all expansion on the part of Royalty was abruptly curtailed. In any event, whatever the reason, all activity at the newly built Cumberland Lodge was stopped. The dogs were sold to a Chicago purchaser who arrived at Crown Point armed with an official looking document that the local people accepted. The price stated and paid was extremely low. The amount paid up was only a small part of the outstanding debts. Then the cows were sold locally at insignificant prices. The foxes and the so-called "trained bear" went to a Chicago animal dealer, and the horses were sold to a liveryman from Blue Island. The buildings were likewise sold at sacrifice prices, and were one by one taken down and used elsewhere for rebuilding. The whole enterprise lasted less than three months, and today it is just as much of a mystery as it was in 1872.

Casually leafing through the old registers or note books from all the hunting lodges, from Thayer to Mill Creek, or down river from Shelby to Kankakee, Ill., we find items like this: "Eight gentlemen here a few days and they got 60 snipe, and 513 ducks" or "The members of the Pittsburg Gun Club and their guests have got a total of 689 ducks as well as many other birds." And the same G. M. Shaver, who belonged to Camp Mulligan, a site and club house existing before the days of the Cumberland Lodge, once made this entry: "From September 1 to September 17 there have been shot 1,100 ducks from this place, as well as many other water fowl." In an undated note written by Aaron F. Ferman of Hebron, Ind., he reported: "Many prominent people are on the Kankakee this season. Each hunter can average 100 birds a day if he wants to make the effort." Another note by some unknown guide said: "We guides have been given all the excess game for shipment to South Water Street in Chicago. Much of it is sold by the dealers there without them making any remittance to the shippers. They're mostly a crooked lot."

At the White House Gun Club near Baum's Bridge, where George Wilcox was the manager, there were many old water-stained, and weather-stained scraps of paper recovered from the structure after it was abandoned. Shooting records were found of such persons as Gen. Harrison, Riley, Pullman, Studebaker, Palmer, and Gates—stating how many ducks each killed in



*Rockville, Terre Haute and Indianapolis Club House built in 1879. To the left is shown in part the White House Hunting Club Building, built in 1878 at Baum's Bridge*

a stated time. A. P. Knotts wrote of similar records, as did Harrison Dolson, who wrote on the wall of the club of a man who got two deer with one shot. Unfortunately, the name of the person had been obliterated by rain which came through a leaky roof and ran down the wall. There was also a record posted some place along the river that "Ed McNeil got seven deer in two days." There were perhaps a hundred "records" posted by the guides. The place of posting was everything from the wall of a dining room to the smooth boards forming the outer siding of the buildings – and of course, the scraps of note paper and scribbling in ancient books.

Among the celebrities who came primarily to fish and vacation, the most prominent was probably Gen. Lew Wallace. He came to the Kankakee so frequently that his name is anchored to the river. Before the Civil War, Lew Wallace came to the region with a number of young men from Indianapolis and perhaps from Crawfordsville, also. It was at a time when they were in doubt about which side to take in the Slavery Issue. They brought small tents with them and set them up about where the Collier Hotel was eventually built. After a few days of fishing, camping, and discussing, they adopted the anti-slavery side of the controversy.

The first record date recording the arrival of "State Senator Lewis Wallace and Samuel Wilson" was in 1858 when the duck hunting season was just beginning. Wallace was then 30 years old. The next time he came –according to the old newspapers—was in 1860, but as there was already a Terre Haute, a Rockville, and an Indianapolis Hunting Club here, it is safe to assume that he came at other times also.

He used the isolation of the Kankakee River as a "hideout" when he wanted to get away from the period he was "on the shelf" after the battle of Shiloh until he was recalled by Gov. Morton. He bought several tracts of land along the river. Later he bought a local power barge which he converted into a canvas-walled houseboat, occupying it periodically until he died in 1906. He had made the Kankakee his vacation spot for 43 years.

It was at his camp on the Kankakee that Gen. Wallace wrote part of his book *The Fair God*. Some writers surmise that he probably did some of the outlining for *Ben Hur* along the river. In his unfinished biography, he mentions that he wrote some of *The Prince of India* while on vacation.

In the biography he also mentions that his wife called the Kankakee his "happy hunting ground." His houseboat which he called "The Thing" had all the comforts of the day, as applied to a hunting and fishing resort, and on that boat, he sometimes entertained some of the neighboring sportsmen.

After 1900 the General's visits grew less frequent, and when he died, February 14, 1906, some writer on one of the Valparaiso newspapers said "The world has sent St. Peter a wonderful Valentine."

Sometime after his death, someone in the Kankakee River region communicated with the family at Crawfordsville, offering to buy the houseboat but Mrs. Wallace said no. "Let the boat gradually become buried by the sand and in time become a part of the river bed beside which the General

spent his most restful hours during the turmoil of his tumultuous life", she stated.

However the barge was not in the river. It was up on the rails beside the Pittsburg Gun Club where he had it placed each winter. It did not become buried in the sand. When Henry Wallace sold the various parcels of real estate, he sold the barge, the winch, and the rails, with the tract adjacent to the Gun Club. The purchaser was permitted to take the old vessel apart and use much of it for a riverside cabin.

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It was on November 9, 1888, about three p. m., said Werich, that Don Lytle, who was spending a few days along the river, was casually casting in one direction or another, as he rowed slowly up towards the bridge in Jasper County. As he came within sight of the canvas-covered Lew Wallace house-boat, he was surprised to find it occupied, even though the General had gone home in September to take part in the election campaign.

As Mr. Lytle neared the house-boat, a stranger appeared at the rail. The canvas was down on all sides, and smoke issued from the chimney, giving conclusive evidence that they—there were seemingly three men aboard—had been there some little time.

The stranger was a sturdy, round-bearded individual. Beside him soon stood a much younger man. "Are you A. P. Knotts?" asked the bearded man.

"No," answered Don, "A. P. has gone for the season. He goes away to law school as soon as college begins."

"That's why he didn't come to meet us," said the speaker. "I and my son-in-law are guests on the Wallace boat for a few days. We've been out this afternoon but got nothing. Can you come aboard and stay over night and guide us to some hunting in the morning?"

"No, I can't very well do that," answered Lytle, not knowing that he was talking to the President of the United States. "But I'll come over in the morning and go out with you." That was the way it was left.

The next morning quite early, Don and a companion, whose name is not remembered now, rowed over to the house-boat. The President got into Don's boat, and the son-in-law got into the Wallace skiff with the other man and they started out duck hunting.

Don Lytle told this story to a number of listeners in a local store at Valparaiso on the morning of March 14, 1901, when word came that Benjamin Harrison had died.

It was November 9, 1888, when I neared the house boat anchored off the Pittsburg Gun Club landing. I didn't know who was aboard, but as I rowed near a man hailed me and I rowed nearer.

He told me they had expected a guide but that he hadn't shown up so with help from Ira Brainard's care-taker, the two men and their Negro cook got on the house-boat, and set up their outfit for a few days outing.

He asked me to be their guide for a few days hunting and invited me to come aboard, but I had a number of ducks and fish in my boat and the folks were waiting for me. I said I'd come back in the morning. The man who did the talking was a rather old sturdy, round-bearded individual and he said, 'My son-in-law and I came at the invitation of Gen. Lew Wallace to occupy his boat and hunt ducks.' They'd been out and had seen nothing. The cook was all set to prepare a big duck dinner, so I gave them four of the best looking birds from mine, as I had more than my family could eat.

Next morning I rowed over just after daylight, and the bearded man introduced himself as Ben. J. Harrison, the newly elected president of the United States. I don't remember the name of the son-in-law. I can't remember who I had picked up along the river that morning to accompany me—I've often tried to recall who it was—in any event when I rowed along side, the older man got in my boat and the younger man got in the Wallace skiff that my companion had untied from the stern. We went out and I found a good place. Pretty soon I heard the young fellow blazing away at the sky down the river from us, so I told Mr. Harrison we'd better row down and tell that young man to wait until the birds got down to tree-top level before we started shooting, otherwise we'd get nothing. So I rowed down to the lagoon and the President told the boy to wait for low-flying birds.

Well, before long, the ducks came over pretty good and quite low so we all got a good bag. I was just about the happiest man along the river for I had been out hunting with the President of the United States, even if he hadn't been inaugurated yet.

They stayed there four days, until the weather turned cold—and until they got fed up on bread and beans and salmon and stuff from the store. They had all the ducks they wanted after two days. After they had gone, I stayed to help Wilcox and the men along the river get the house-boat dragged up on its cradle and to get all things fixed ship-shape for winter. We got done just in time for that night a real storm blew in from the lake.

Afterwards I read that President Harrison could charm a great audience but that in meeting people individually he was aloof and distant. I doubt that; for with me, he was the nicest sort of gentleman. He once said that had he known how mean and bitter a Hoosier campaign could be, he would never have run for president. He was what I would call a gracious man. I met him once or maybe twice more, but what pleased me mostly was that when he came back four or five years later he asked Wilcox about me.

I remember, when he was President, the question of pensions for the old soldiers came up and there was a question of qualification. He said: "This is no time to be weighing the claims of old soldiers with apothecary's scales." He appointed Teddy Roosevelt as head of the Civil Service Commission to get graft out of that organization, and

named John Wanamaker Postmaster General "because that department needed a business man."

It was several years later that he came up to the river with Gen. Lew Wallace and Maurice Thompson — that was the time he asked about me.

As I later found out, Lew Wallace's father, David Wallace, was a close friend of the President's grandfather, Wm. Henry Harrison. The family closeness has continued ever since. I was told that the rounded black beard I remembered, was a pure white beard the last time he was along the Kankakee. I guess it's true that being president takes a number of years off a man's life. When I heard he had died it was somewhat like losing an old friend.



*The Louisville Club House at Baum's Bridge, built in 1878*

## CHAPTER XXI

Going further down the river into Illinois one comes to the French-Canadian part of the Kankakee Valley. Long before the days of the Atomic Power plant that now marks the end of the river, Lew Staret wrote: "Among the pioneers of America they were a conspicuous romantic group. By nature adventurous, they were restless, courageous as explorers, and as voyagers and couriers du bois. As fur traders and as missionaries among the Indians, they blazed their trails through the wilderness and penetrated the lonely riches of the Great Lakes. Their trails spread out like the ribs of a fan. Every stream in the Mississippi Valley echoed the swash of their batteau and their lusty noted chansons."

In the epic struggle of the handful of frontiersmen that subdued the wilderness of the Kankakee and flung out the new borders of civilization the French-Canadian loomed a vivid, heroic type, a rover, a fighter, and a "runner-of-the-woods."

With the advent of civilization, the French-Canadian ceased to hold the center of the stage. As his scenic background shifted from the rugged grandeur of the primeval forest to the pastoral setting of furrowed hills and fruitful valleys, studded with hamlets and rambling homesteads, he changed his role. Small need now for the explorer, the courier du bois. Thus new economic conditions have developed in this modern day, a new type of French-Canadians.

Many of these footloose adventurers in the early days intermarried with the Indians, and as a result, one still finds distant descendants of those early voyagers in the outpost of society, still following the woods, or living by trapping, or by logging — or by guiding tourists. The blood in their veins is still that of the pioneer Frenchman, pure save for the Indian strain.

Most of these "backwoodsmen" are finally turning to the soil. They have secured land and have settled down as inhabitants — as farmers.

Here one may now find descendants of the courier du bois in a more or less idyllic setting.

Among their sites along the Kankakee River are settlements with something of the quaint atmosphere of old France. The people are sometimes blackhaired, sparkling eyed, warm hearted, vivacious and ingenious, indicative of their ancestors. Their beautifully serene faith in their church and their cure and in the beneficence of God is always apparent. Essentially they have not changed much from the pioneer Frenchmen who once was in almost sole possession of the whole Kankakee River region.

For probably two hundred years before 1825 ,the French bateau traveled down the lake to the St. Joseph and the Kankakee. From time to time, some settled down in the region, then sent back for or went back for their friends and relatives. Later these bands or groups were increased in the Kankakee Valley by the Cure Pere Chiniquy, who came to minister to all the French-Canadians.

Today there are many French-Canadian towns along the river: Bourbonnaus, L'Erable, Papineau, St. Marie, Manteno, St. Anne, Momence—and others. The newly arrived so-called American civilization of the valley has little affected the nature of these older inhabitants. They cling tenaciously to the language and customs of the French. As a whole, they are progressive, but in the quiet of the fertile valleys, they hold on to their tranquil, bucolic life. They plow their fields, herd their cattle, shuck their yellow corn, repair their ivy-covered cottages—and even split fence rails. The women put up all types of food for the winter—and, at the end of each day when the bull frog grumps in the bayou, and the owl comes up across the moon, the old Frenchman smokes his cob pipe, serene in a troubled world. He is mellow with contentment as long as he knows there are fat cattle grazing in his meadows, buckwheat cake and sausage in his larder—and many children in his cottage to make it warm with laughter—and a Cure close by to bless them all.

The reedy banks of this historic old river are lined with hamlets and homes of fishermen, of woodsmen, of river men—and in the old cottages, there are still sunlit windows festooned with garlic braids and red pepper strings. Perhaps Lew Staret wrote too long ago, perhaps the scene has changed with the new generations, perhaps the scene he described is only a memory—but there are remnants of it left.

Another writer and poet, Wallace Bruce Amsbary, in an introduction to his book "Ballads of the Bourbonnais" says:

In the early 1850's, one Pere Chiniquy, a priest of Montreal, came to join this Kankakee colony. He liked the country and the people. Soon, he returned to Montreal to induce a number of others to join the colony in the land of promise.

Chiniquy founded the town of St. Anne. The settlement prospered and grew. Because of a seemingly unwise policy of the Catholic Church, Chiniquy and his whole congregation seceded from the Church of Rome. In any event, there was a church war in St. Anne that became widely known. Eventually it was settled, and today the church has over seven thousand members.

Bourbonnais is described by Amsbary as being "A settlement with over 500 inhabitants. It is a typical French Settlement, in which hardly a single American resides."

But the town of St. Anne was once called "The Lourdes of America". Within the beautiful church is the Shrine of St. Anne. On the sacred altar reposess a casket containing a bone of a finger of the sainted mother of Mary.

Annually for many years a "novena" or nine day prayer, followed by a pilgrimage to this shrine, takes place. Thousands from all parts of Northern Indiana and Northern Illinois participate in the ceremonies. Although the pilgrimage was originally intended to make reparation for the schism of Pere Chiniquy, in the compromise came the lame, the sick, the distressed—all with faith and power seeking consolation and surcease from their sorrows. Many remarkable cures have been recorded.

The dialect and the idiom are singularly rich. The people are droll, lovable, and distinctly neighborly. There is a different page in the history book for their's is a life that is distinctly that of the Kankakee Valley. Their's is a type of race redolent with the distant, vagrant, and prevailing atmosphere of the ancient French-Indian settlers who came into the region about the time France's King Louis XIV signed the fateful evacuation decree. They huddled together in this region, assured by the victorious English that they would not be molested if they conformed to the British requirements.

It was Louise Morgan Amsbary who wrote the lament of the Frenchman who ventured into the city of Chicago to work, almost at the edge of the Kankakee Valley, but so very far away.

"Ef I could fin de way to sum green country lane  
Where little leeves stir softly in de aire:  
An' happey child'en play and make the daisy-chain:  
An' birds sing al day long with'ut one caire  
I'd rest my weery hed upon the quiet groun'—  
I'd rest my lon'lee hart in summaire's day,  
An' all de cruel soun's of dese beeg noisee town  
Wou'd be forgot—if I could fin de way."

## CHAPTER XXII

When the Indians of the Kankakee signed the various treaties and agreed to move to a reservation in Kansas, they were premitted to accept a small current payment per head. The balance of the treaty money was to go to the whole reservation. The stipulation was that the Indians assemble at various designated sites, regardless of tribal affiliations. From those sites they would be guided into a large emigration mass at Chicago, and then with army equipment, they'd be taken West.

The movement occupied about four years time, beginning in 1834. All Indians who were permanent residents of a site—who claimed certain tracts as their own regardless of tribal claims, and who were of the mixed race category since the occupation days by the French and the English, were allowed to retain their lands under the "Indian Reserves" paragraph of the treaty. All along the Kankakee there were "reserves" but in proportion to the population, the number was very small.

The moving of ten or twelve thousand or more Indians to a new reservation was no sinecure—in fact, it was an extremely difficult task at first. One historian named Josiah P. Dunn wrote an article about one of the first trips which he called "The Trail of Death."

Some subsequent writers wrote articles based on his story but other writers consulted army records, old documents, papers in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and talked with participants. Their accounts belittled Dunn's sensational story. They pointed out that unfortunately many sick, aged, or—in the case of infants—weakened individuals, did die along the way—but that the same number would probably have died at home had they never been moved across the country.

The Indians from St. Joseph, Porter, Starke, LaPorte, and Jasper Counties, and area not known by those names at the time—but simply called "The Kankakee Region", were ordered to assemble at Indiantown, about one and one half miles south of where the town of Hebron, Indiana is located today. Other groups were assembled elsewhere. From these points an army officer and a few enlisted men made the necessary records, and piloted the groups to Chicago, where the "big assembly" of this region was to take place. Turning back to old writings on the subject, this report written by Major Irving has been found:

The movement of the Indians from the Kankakee Valley and the adjacent territories was a memorable affair. It was not unlike the herding of cattle. The poor redman had become a meek individual since he had been convinced of white superiority.

In the group that I supervised there was no color, no feathered head dresses, no decorated pony tails, no beads, and no brilliant blankets. There was only a grey mass of men, women, and children squatting patiently on the ground, while a few in turn, at the brusque order and a waving of the hands, got up and went to the clerk's table

to give their names. There were 326 Indians in my group. They were formed into long lines, maybe thirty or forty at a time, to give names to the recorder.

Ninety per cent of those names were destined to never be recognized or in any way identified with individuals. The clerks had written down a number of letters, that to his untrained ear sounded at least vaguely like the name the Indian gave. Sufficient to those clerks was the fact that they got some sort of name written down on a paper that was to be forwarded to Washington.

This particular group, wrote Charles H. Hyde in Beatty's History, consisted of small contingents from War Club Lake, English Lake, then called Grand Marais, Little Kankakee, Rolling Prairies, LaCrosse, San Pierre and Wanatah. Places at the time of Hyde's writing bore these names, but probably had other names in 1834.

Col. Brady was a rather ruthless individual as far as Indians were concerned for it had been 22 years since the Dearborn Massacre and army men have long memories. He was determined that all the Indians possible be herded into and through Chicago "just to show them the place they destroyed." His idea was to impress the Indians with the futility of rebelling against the whiteman's authority—but that was unnecessary. They had been convinced long ago.

All the way down the Kankakee, where the towns of St. Anne and Momence are now, and all along the river there were other groups being assembled. Beyond Chicago, the various groups were being separated to go along different routes—via Ottuma, or Peoria, or by way of Quincy, "so they could move faster with less conflict." Camp sites had previously been set up by the army. The army mess tents supplied one meal a day. Any other food they wanted they had to carry with them.

At Indiantown, a group of young Ottawas and some Pottawattomies slipped away from the groups and started to Michigan. The one-time savages, who had once prided themselves on their ability to endure cold, hunger, and suffering, were now meek, sorrowful, and very uncertain about what type of land they were going to find in the West.

There was one group headed by a tough and wiry chief who asked to "ride their ponies" instead of walking or riding in army wagons. This was granted if they paid \$10.00 each for army horses. This they did, using a part of the money that had been given them as a "current payment." Hardly had they mounted their animals and rode off toward Chicago when illicit traders appeared with "firewater" and tried to trade their diluted whisky for the horses. But fortunately, the chief was a wise man and the military authorities took these traders into custody.

There was an English speaking Indian—a mixed-blood of a Scotch-English father and an Indian-American mother—named Alexander Robinson, who was the leader of the departing group. He smoothed over the rough places, talked the malcontents into submission, and was in general the go-between for the Indians and the Army.

Among the names the clerk wrote that day was one entered as Charley Roy. He was a half-breed whose father had worked with and had admired Charlevoix. The clerk didn't have time to listen to his explanation of how he came to have the name and how it should be spelled. Chief Charlevoix was a kindly man, intent on making the journey to the West as comfortable as possible for his people. He and his group had come down the lake from Traverse Bay to join the Chicago-bound assembly. As any leader should, he approached Col. Brady's tent to ask what sort of supplies his people should take with them, what food, and what blankets—and what about the old, the sick and the children.

But to Brady, an Indian was an Indian, and he just didn't have time to listen to the old chief. So Chief Charlevoix walked sorrowfully back to his encamped group and told them to go back to Traverse. We will wait until the white soldiers come for us he said. And that night all the group quietly disappeared from the encampment. Had Col. Brady been a little bit attentive, all the Indians from the Ottawa tribe would have come to Indiantown of their own accord—but as it was, the final rounding up and transportation of the Ottawa tribe cost the government several thousand dollars.

Scribbled on the margin of one of Brady's reports is this note: "Only about ten per cent of these Indians along the river are full bloods. They have been mixed with the French for over a hundred years—and with the English for a subsequent twenty years."

By noon of the third day all the expected incoming Indians had arrived and had been duly listed. Those who had decided to spend a part of their funds for horses had been given animals from Ft. Dearborn. It was exactly what the army wanted. They had already begun to worry about the expense of keeping half a hundred cavalry horses over the coming winter and the selling of them was considered a very wise move. Let it appear on record that the army did not unload undesirable or unreliable horses on the red men. The horses were good, young, and sound animals. All along the river south of Indiantown discarded Indian ponies were milling around. Soon they drifted across the river and wended their way slowly southward—all but one old brown mare who was content to live the balance of her allotted days near the Kankakee. To this day that area adopted by the old mare is called Horse Prairie.

At the junction of Eagle Creek, West Creek, and Cedar Creek, where each emptied into the Kankakee, contingents of Indians were gathering. They were giving up their prairie lands and their happy hunting grounds after uncounted generations of occupancy. This was early October and they were leaving fields of unharvested corn still drying on the ghostly stalks. Every squaw, young and old alike, carried a woven sack of shelled corn, as much as she could handle. The balance of the crop was left for animals or for the incoming settlers, many of whom had already taken an unauthorized possession of sites along the river bottomland.

There were six hundred Pottawatomies at a village west and south of

Cedar Lake. They, too, joined the seemingly never ending, ever-broadening files of bewildered Indians. All going West to an unknown land. Some had wagons and teams, and some were on horseback, but mostly they were afoot.

One group from Wiggin's Point was all one vast family. They had four wagons covered like those brought into the region by the newly arriving white settlers. The harnesses were well made of seasoned raw-hide, patterned after the harnesses of the army. On the front seat rode the man of the family with one of the older men riding beside him. The balance of the family—or families rode mostly inside the wagon. Usually there was an aged squaw, and then a younger squaw with several children — some of whom were infants.

This whole contingent had all the ear-marks of prosperity. Their chosen chief had taken up the "current funds" allotment from each member. He was determined that none of this advance payment should be spent for firewater or gambled away in Chicago, where the "great assembly" was taking place. The four wagons waited beside the road for an opening in the parade — and at a sign given by the army men, they wheeled into an open interval — and were on their way. The great hard-packed dance floor that had seen the ceremonies of thousands of Indians was now vacant, and the only sign of the ancient hillside cemetery was the scattered piles of stones. The last bits of white cloth on poles had been taken down — all but the one of their aged chief of yesterday. He had told them to go on with the Westward movement without objection. In accordance with his instructions, the village had let the first two contingents pass by. They were to wait for the old man to die. He had given exact orders as to how and where he was to be buried. He was to be placed in a seated position on a side-hill grave which was to be lined with slabs of rock and with food supplies at his side. He was to be spiritually resurrected within a few months, and would then be an invisible but influential spirit among his people again.

He was Chief Soogate, a descendant of the famous Chief Dehinnis. He was buried with a blanket around him and a kettle of hickory nuts at his feet. He had died within the "three sunsets" as he had predicted. His grave had been sealed with other limestone slabs, some taken from the old French ford crossing the Kankakee. The location of the grave was disguised with carefully planted hickory brush and sod from the prairie — and soon the whole Soogate dynasty was enroute to a new home, sandwiched in between a contingent of Miamis and of Kickapoos.

At Red Oak Island there was a group of 200 Pottawattomies. Their village had been a prosperous one headed by James Bertrand, the store-keeper at the East End, and his Indian wife and "lassel" of French-Indian progeny. At the other end of the island lived Louis La Voir. He, too, had an Indian wife and family. Both the store-keeper and a few "reserve" Indians were permitted to remain—but there was now no business for the

stores. Soon both sold out whatever they could to the incoming whites, and "took up farm land" down the river in the Bourbonnais region.

There was another crossing called the Pottawattomie Ford where the trail leading to and from the river was deepened by centuries of Indians packing it down with their moccasins. It followed the lone ridge in the swamplands. Its present-day site is about where the Sumwa Resort is located and was another gathering place for the departing Indians. Historians of a subsequent time wrote:

This area was called "The Big Woods" of which there were many of the same name along the Kankakee. The Indians had some suffix that designated which one they were talking about. Most of them consisted of great Oak Groves, with many scattered sugar maples, yellow popular, and white pine. In these locations there were one or more Indian villages, and in each village there was a "boat-yard", where dug-out canoes were made during the winter. Even now under the accumulation of many layers of forest debris, deposits of charcoal are to be found where the redman slowly and patiently burned out the center of a felled log to make his canoe.

As this group of Indians prepared for departure, they had some difficulty in deciding what to do with their boats. Some, in spite of their leaders' protests, sold them to a white settler, some deliberately burned them, some pushed the canoes out into the Kankakee and let them float away, and some filled their treasured dug-outs with rocks and earth and sank them deeply into the depths of the river. During the excavations for a new and straightened channel for the Kankakee, one of these sunken canoes, preserved for over a hundred years by immersion in the mud and water, was recovered by a dredge and is today an exhibit in the August Johnson basement-museum in the northwest corner of Jasper County.

It was in this "big woods" area that the always lengthening file of Indians stopped to rest for the night. Army tents, mess equipment, and a "clerk's tent" were set up before dusk. By the time the seven or eight hundred Indians arrived and found places to spread their blankets for the night, a great "army mess", consisting mostly of a cauldron full of corn meal mush containing chopped bits of meat, was ready for serving. Each Indian had a cup or bowl or tin pan of some kind and they lined up in four files while the "cook's assistants" dipped out a ladle full of the stew to each individual. There was no bread and no coffee. Simply a pan of stew—with water from the Kankakee as an accompaniment—was served. Stew was served at night and porridge in the morning. For many days, this was their subsistence. The evening meal was prepared from whatever the mess sergeant could requisition from the nearest town. Bean stew was the most common night-time meal, although rice and flour-gravy were commonplace. Frequently, the cauldrons were emptied before the tail-enders got to the mess tent—and in disgust many of the young bucks simply walked away from the camp and "escaped" to Michigan.

There is an east and west ridge, deposited by the glaciers during the ice age that marks the divide for the drainage into the Kankakee Basin and the drainage into Lake Michigan. Near the summit of this ridge there is a site known as Blachley's Corners where an embryonic village once existed. It was selected by Col. Brady as an assembly point for the Indians from Michigan during the early part of the movement to the West — and it appears on the local records as the scene of "The Indian Rebellion."

Under the leadership of a chief, whose name appears on the Clerk's records as Pay-squaw-comwah, about two hundred of the Ottawas came as a forerunner of the oncoming Michigan Indians. The exact site was some distance from the "corners" at an erstwhile Indian encampment location called "Boiling Springs". The two-hundred found many army tents provided, a mess tent set up, and a clerk's desk in operation. They were provided with blankets if they had none. They were given a meal and sent to bed.

On the following morning there was an upheaval. They flatly refused to "Go West." When the bugle sounded for the morning meal, only the chief appeared in front of his tent. Col. Brady was nearby when the bugle sounded, it was with astonishment that he saw none of the new arrivals emerging from their tents for breakfast. Pay-quaw-comwah strode angrily up to the Colonel and said "We are going back to Michigan. We will not go West." The Colonel brusquely ordered the chief away, and started toward the tents. The chief gave a whistling-type howl; at once every Indian appeared in front of his tent armed with a loaded rifle.

The Colonel had objected to the army allowing the Indians to take their guns and knives with them but he had been over-ruled. Now, he was threatened by about two hundred rifles, mostly ancient British made weapons that were issued to the Indians during the War of 1812—but they were still serviceable guns—and the Colonel knew it.

A spokesman for the tribe, an individual named—or at least called—"Big Foot", came up to the chief and stood beside him. Big Foot was able to speak English fluently, and had been told what to say:

"We are not going. Today we turn back. We are not pieces of broken tribes to be treated mean. We have come from one great tribe. There are several thousand awaiting us up in Michigan. We have many warriors. We cannot trust the white soldiers. We are going back, and we will kill every white man that tries to stop us."

Col. Brady quickly sensed that some unexpected incident or condition had developed since the Indians arrived at Boiling Springs. Abruptly it came to him. These newly arrived Indians had been seen in consultation with those from the up-river village, who had been given government horses, in lieu of a part of their treaty money. Brady waited until the Indian had completed his statement. The Indian continued:

"Now we turn back with our bellies empty. We know you will not give us food for our journey back home. But even so, we will go back. You cannot stop us."

Neither the chief nor Big Foot turned and walked away. It was evident that they expected a reply.

"Of course you can kill us," said Brady, "you have two hundred braves armed with the rifles we permitted you to keep. That's a good way to show your appreciation. It's been done before. I can't stop you. You can butcher my few soldiers and go on your way. But to kill us will only be bad for you. Those of the Red Men who have already gone westward can tell you. They have seen the Ft. Dearborn again rebuilt, and its big village with many hundred white soldiers. There are at least 20 soldiers there for every one the Indians killed during the Massacre. You may kill us here, but many more will come—as many as the sands of the sea. If I guess right you are discontented because the Pottawatomies from the Ford got government horses. You, too, may have new horses as soon as you get to Ft. Dearborn, if you will sign away ten dollars for each one from your treaty money. That's what the others did."

There was a buzz of conversation among the threatening Indians who had approached and stood around their chief. The fact that the Pottawatomies had signed away some of their money was news to the Michigan group. At some sort of a hidden signal, they turned away and went toward the mess table where a steaming pot of "jerky-and-gravy", boiled beans and corn bread, awaited them. They drank the gravy by the cupful and ate great hunks of corn bread with their plates of beans. They didn't need horses; they had all they needed. To them, the "current funds" allotted for beginning life anew in the Kansas reservation was of great importance. The "Rebellion of Boiling Springs" was over. Within an hour, the Michigan group, except the messenger who was sent back to the tribe, was riding slowly down the river path. At the Cedar Lake trail they turned north and wended their way through the little settlement called Robinson's Prairie and then on to Chicago.

And so it went week after week—humor, pathos, tragedy, and rebellion. But the Indian went West, and within a year or two there were only the "reserve" Indians left.

"Chief Blinking Eyes", who had headed one of the river groups to Chicago, told of many incidents along the long, long trail west when he came back.

Of the newly-acquired horses by the Ford Settlement Indians, there was a three-horse team that had worked for years hauling a cassion around the parade grounds. Separated to three new owners they were continually worried—and they didn't like the smell of Indians. In the great assembly of horse and riders assigned to a leading position in the westward trek, there frequently came an excited whinny from across the prairie, and from the distance would come two answering calls. In spite of everything the riders could do, these three horses worked their way together and were soon traveling three-abreast. Just as long as they were permitted to keep that association, they travled well—but unfortunately there was some sort of a family feud among the Pottawatomies, and one of the trio of riders "was

not on speaking terms with the other two." But it was soon evident that the three horses would travel together or not at all. So for several days, the "enemy" was forced to ride with the other two. Old Chief Blinking Eyes finally got a more congenial Indian to change horses with the "enemy" and for the balance of the two week trip, things went along smoothly.

The available crackling, brittle, dust-covered reports of that "trek" are necessarily very brief, but sometimes they lead to an incident, found only in the old newspaper reports of "reunions" among the settlers. Elizabeth Bryant, until her demise at 86, told of the departure of Black Eagle and his squaw from Indiantown on the Kankakee. They had three sons, two of whom were still listed as fugitives for their participation in the Ft. Dearborn Massacre. The third boy, considerably younger, had not taken part in the affair; in fact, he had opposed it. Several of the settlers at the village where the city of Momence is now located, who were descendants of old time French inhabitants, supported the son's claim that he had not been engaged in the attack.

So it was that Eagle and his squaw could have their youngest son—now about 35 years old—with them on the journey. But the two older men were "still fugitives." They dared not be recognized by the soldiers, for although it was now almost 25 years since the Massacre, participating Indians were frequently "found dead" in some unexplained manner. So they quietly turned their backs on their parents and rode northward to join the "escapees" who were finding a sanctuary in Michigan.

The infamous pock-marked Indian known as Main Pock, who had led the Dearborn Massacre, had fled to the "forks of the Kankakee" to hide out. Although there are no records attesting the fact, the old settlers, especially the Quakers who occupied the site known as "Quakerdom", tell of roving bands of avenging soldiers from Ft. Wayne who for several years tracked down the participants of that Massacre. They frequently killed Indians "of the right age and tribe", whether they knew they had taken a part in the affair or not. John Dillon, in his *History of Indiana* of 1856 says: "Main Pock, leader of the Massacre, hid out up the Kankakee near the Fords. He was killed and secretly buried by his own relatives, who thus prevented an avenging body of roving soldiers from destroying their village—and perhaps killing some of their innocent men."

In spite of a few "tear jerker" type of stories of the movement of the Indians westward, there was apparently no lamentation or wailing or gnashing of teeth. There was some regret at leaving their homeland, but the plan of resettlement had been known so long, and had been so thoroughly discussed by the Indians that the "sharp anguish" had vanished long before the actual journeys began. The first contingent went west in the fall of 1834, but the actual movement on a large scale began in 1836 and lasted about four years. The records show it marked "complete" in 1840.

J. Lorenzo Werich, of whom previous mention has been made, went out to the new reservation many years later to talk with some of the Indians

and to gain material for his book *Pioneer Hunters of the Kankakee*. He found only two who belonged to the Kankakee region at that late date, although there may have been others. As he says, 'Just as I found two who remembered the Kankakee and the early days, the dinner bell rang and my two Indians stalked majestically away toward the dining room. They just couldn't be bothered about history.'



*MOSES THOMAS—Who was the last of known Indians living in Porter County.*

"Old Mose" as he was called by everyone lived  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of Crocker, his last years were spent at a Soldier's Home in Ohio. He was assumed to be 83 years old at the time of his death. Born 1835-1918.

## CHAPTER XXIII

The Kankakee has been the subject of many stories and articles, and at the risk of saying that which has been said before in this book, a few important paragraphs are quoted. These extracts are presented to give an overall view of the Kankakee River and its people of pioneer days.

"Although the Kankakee Valley is noted for its truck gardens and its flower growers, there is a number of documents on file protesting in behalf of conservation organizations and wild life enthusiasts the complete utilization of the one-time marshlands for agricultural use. The Isaac Walton League is also protesting agricultural use of parts of the valley. The Agricultural Departments of both Illinois and Indiana, and the U. S. Bureau of Agriculture do not agree with the opposition." So said a writer in an agricultural journal.

Prof. Alfred H. Meyer of Valparaiso University in his book entitled, *The Kankakee Marsh*, published by the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters in 1936 says:

Systematic studies in land utilization, undertaken by the Federal Government, and by the respective State Governments, and also by numerous public and private agencies, indicate the need for scientific analysis of the land-utilization program.

There are large areas of marginal land that should be retired from cultivation. The produce does not justify the work and expense necessary to get a satisfactory return.

To bring great areas of rich land into production was the purpose of the Kankakee Drainage Project.

Regions which at one time or another have experienced conflicting claims offer excellent material for land utilization study. The Kankakee Marshland is such an area. Here clashed the interest of the hunter-sportsman-conservation group with those of organized land companies interested in the reclamation of wet lands for agriculture.

This author's interest was aroused as a result of certain public propaganda and a petition to the Federal Government by a group of Isaac Walton League members to restore a part of the marsh, once nationally famous for its wild life.

The Kankakee country represents an intermorainal marsh reclamation extending from South Bend southwestward to Momence, Illinois.

Down this flat-floored valley coursed the original meandering Kankakee River, now a series of straight ditches. Rising within a few miles of the St. Joseph River and forming a head-water branch of the Illinois River, the Kankakee with its St. Joseph portage provided a strategic link in the Great Lakes-Mississippi route of early travelers—the French explorers, the traders, and the missionaries.

Serving successfully in its native state, the hunter, the trapper, the marsh-hay cutter and then the professional sportsman, the modern dredged

Kankakee—ditched and drained — had added over half a million acres to the famous drift farming section of the Central Plains.

The Kankakee is located in the more favorable humid section east of the Mississippi. Its summers places it within the “a” subdivision of the “Df” climatic type of the Loppen System and fairly well within the northern boundary of the corn belt.

Demographical relations are no less significant. Rimmed by a score of towns and villages, the marsh at its eastern end is terminated by the city of South Bend, Indiana, while its western extremity is within 25 mile of greater Chicago. Less than 150 miles from the nation’s center of population, it is within a few hours of half the population of the nation.

Originally marsh prairies of aquatic sedges, potential grazing areas, wild rice sloughs, home of countless water fowl, flag ponds lined with muskrat houses, a narrow but almost uninterrupted swamp forest, full of game rimming a twisting river teeming with fish, the wet prairies made humanly habitable by the interspersion of sandy island oak barrens surmounting the highest flood waters— such in brief is the physical set-up which attracted the squatter pioneer from the East, who sought contentment in the solitude and seclusion of a marshland wilderness.

In the eyes of the reclamationist half a century later, this same general scene reinterprets itself as an open prairie, practically unincumbered by a forest cover, with a flat valley floor, a high water table, and a presumably rich alluvial bottom soil, located within less than 100 miles from the greatest stock and grain market in the world.

The cultural subtractions and additions incident to the drainage operations have modified almost beyond recognition the general area picture of the prereclamation period. Yet certain elements of the natural landscape and their influence on human culture persist in general outline to this day.

Many of the marsh dunal islands, particularly the unoccupied ones, and much of the original ‘Meander lands’ along the Kankakee are still marked as of old by timber growth of upland and swamp species respectively.

The “islands” presently encompassed by dry land continue to be the preferred sites of regional settlements.

The conditions of the surrounding terrain in relation to the agricultural economy are as significant as the “islands” in respect to the human habitat. The latter, rising conspicuously in the form of sand dunes, were recognized at the outset as “barrens” and as generally unsuited to cultivation. But the soil conditions of the flattish marsh areas appear, for the most part, to have been known only superficially and classified categorically with the common type of river bottom and marsh lands. Whatever typical surficial lowland characteristics they may otherwise exhibit, the subsoil and the “islands” of the Kankakee are strictly unique. Sand with local lenses of gravel or clay constitutes the basic structural material of the valley, while mounds and ridges of typical wind-blown sand here and there commonly attain heights of 10 to 15 feet, surmounting the “sea” of water-laid land. Occupying an

intermorial position, with the Valparaiso Moraine on the north and the Maxinkuckee Moraine on the east and southeast, these classic deposits have been classified by Chamberlain as mostly outwash. Part of the valley fill has been attributed to the postulated Kankakee outlet for the glacial waters escaping from the Saginaw lobe by the way of the St. Joseph channel at South Bend.

Bradley attaches great depositional significance to the former lake waters occupying the basin which he denominates "The Old Kankakee." Since many of the sand mounds and ridges are elevated above the highest possible level of the postulated lake, or of actually known marsh waters, which must have been shallow in either case, the sand of the higher elevated spots are clearly aeolian in origin.

For about eight or nine months of the year, water from one to four feet deep covered an area of from three to five miles each side of the river. The area thus assumed the characteristics of a lacustral river rather than an ordinary marsh. Especially was this true at the time of winter ice jams and spring freshets. Having an elevation of approximately 720 feet at its source, the Kankakee trails its way tortuously along the very slight sloping and much oversized valley to a point near Momence, Illinois.

Here at an elevation of 615 feet it encountered a natural dam of silurian limestone outcropping in the river bed. Within the small drop then in only a little more than 100 miles of river — with a meandering distance of 250 miles — the drop was only five inches per mile. In one instance the drop in a space of 35 miles the gradient was only 15 inches. This was at the site of the natural dam.

This small drop, together with annual floods, conspired to make the Kankakee a notoriously rambling stream, ever abandoning old and establishing new channels. As a result there was formed an intricate maze of ox-bow lakes, sloughs, and bayous similar to that depicted by the early map of Ahlgrim.

It was Herbert Skinner, a local historian, who wrote: "The wandering Kankakee was not a very satisfactory political boundary between the northern and southern tiers of counties. And all the distance down the river, from the South Bend portage to the junction with the Des Plaines, the conspicuous characteristics of the river became Yellow River Junction, Ox Bow Bend, Prairie Bend, Cornell Island, Frye's Landing, North Bend, Adam's Ridge, Eagle Bayou, Grape Island, Indian Garden, Water Valley, Point Comfort, Snake Island, Bogus Island, and Bissell Ridge — and dozen of others."

The swamp was a continuous collection of adjacent marshes, with streams descending from the marginal moraines into almost stagnant swamp waters, forming in many cases, deltas and ridge-chains. On almost every link of these chains, called islands, a trapper at some time lived in a shanty or cabin, claiming the area by virtue of some locally devised "trapper's rights". These rights were recognized by the whole fraternity, and were

bought and sold as frequently, or perhaps more frequently than were the claims of the settlers.

These "trappers" were designated as such by the pioneers although the Indians had for many centuries been skillful trappers themselves. These Indians had occupied the swamp lands each season, as conditions permitted. As soon as the French traders appeared, they intensified their trapping to trade peltries for machine-made blankets, hatchets, guns and ammunition, ornaments, clothing — and — unfortunately "fire-water."

When the Spanish explorers turned their horses loose and departed from this continent, the Indians began to possess the animals — which had greatly multiplied — and soon the whole region was being traversed by the Red Man astride his "Indian Pony." The whole Kankakee valley was marked by these animals, turned out to drift southward in winter and re-captured in the summer that followed.

At the time of the first government survey, there were many stray "ponies" mentioned, along with scattered groups of wigwams, not attached to any local village or settlement of Indians, and "many mounds." It will be noted, however, that these field notes did not call them "Indian Mounds" and apparently didn't recognize them as being man made. That discovery came about 26 years later when settlers commenced leveling them to facilitate farming. There were also numerous descriptions of the Kankakee Islands.

The evolution of a never exhausted hunting ground into the 100 mile string of river bottom farms was a slow process. Today, when one reads the figures on garden produce being sent to Chicago, and when one visits the great gladiola producing area at Momence — where over a hundred thousand people come annually, it is realized that for the most part the reclamation project was indeed as profitable as the promoters had said it would be.

Weston A. Goodspeed, historical editor of the *History of Lake and Porter Counties, Indiana*, says:

There is a Kankakee history belonging to Lake County, in common with that of other Kankakee riverside counties in Indiana which no impartial historian can pass over in silence. It is the period of the "Swamp Land Speculations", more commonly called the Swamp Land Frauds.

The United States donated to the state of Indiana certain portions of Government Land within its orders, to be elected in a certain way, and which was designated as 'Swamp Land'.

The Legislature in 1852 passed an act to regulate the sale and proceeds of these swamp areas—and a certain Indiana State Reclamation Fund — which constituted a Drainage Fund. In Lake County, as one instance, the income from these land sales amounted to \$144,000, and a similar amount was estimated for all counties touching the Kankakee Marshland Area. It was assumed by the Legislators that the whole

sum would be greatly in excess of the reclamation cost and the surplus was to go into the State School Fund.

The various County Auditors and County Treasurers were the authorized agents for selling these lands, and a Commissioner of Swamp Lands was appointed for each county. Before long, the State Legislature learned that grafters in considerable number were bilking the Reclamation Fund under the pretext of building channels, ditches, and drainage systems to reclaim the swamps. Men connected with both state and county officers were posing as contractors. With a shovel or hoe they "dug" miniature "ditches" and collected thousands of dollars for their so-called contracts — with the well-paid "approval" of certain crooked officials.

By these well-organized manipulations, practically all of the county funds intended for reclamation were exhausted. There were lawyers and judges who maintained that since no specifications had been drawn up for these ditches, even a hand-made ditch would suffice to collect "contractor's fees." Not a single grafted was forced to return his fraudulently obtained money and not a single crook was indicted.

The Committee found certificates of completion with forged signatures. They also found many such certificates of completion that were paid, where even the gesture of ditch digging had not been made.

Another system of defrauding the state in these Swamp Lands contracts was equally crooked. So-called contractors bought up some of the Government Land as Swamp-covered, at \$1.25 an acre. In reality, they bought good dry and valuable prairie lands, which by affidavit they swore were water-covered, inaccessible, and "of very little value." Within a few months they sold these lands at \$10.00 an acre.

All across the nation the news of these gigantic frauds spread, giving the State of Indiana a reputation for official crookedness that even now, well over a hundred years later, is reviewed by historians.

The Investigation Committee published two thousand copies of their report and sent one to each state and county official and to each member of the state legislature. Within a few years, by bribes, "rewards" and excessively high prices, the grafters gathered up and destroyed the whole edition. Today, only a few museums and historical societies have a copy.



*Some of the rude traps that were used by the early hunters and trappers on the Kankakee before steel traps were invented*

## CHAPTER XXIV

Following the Kankakee from its source among the springs and swamps of the South Bend area, to its outlet at the Dresden, Illinois vicinity — where its waters hold and generate electricity at the great atomic power plant — the traveler traverses an area that saw at one end the virtual dawn of civilization, and at the other end the dawn of nuclear energy converted into power. Probably no river in the world has participated in such wide-spanned development.

Where electric power is now manufactured for thousands of homes and industries, the unknown Indians of a prehistoric era turned their canoes from the Kankakee to the Des Plains, enroute to the Mississippi.

Explorers, missionaries, traders and adventurers came this way when New France was sending out feelers into the great unknown Indian country. At several sites these Frenchmen found unexplained signs of some distant past occupation. There were mounds, remains of smelting furnaces, paved river-bottoms at least two fords across the Kankakee, and some piles of laboriously carried stones, whose purpose was unknown.

At the end of Lake Michigan there were perhaps a dozen canoe routes that with, or without portages, once gave Kankakee travelers access to that lake. Just beyond the northern edge of the swamps, there was an upland area that had been for many generations devoted to a village of some kind. The earth was hard packed there, and deepened Indian trails showed the pioneers that uncounted years had passed since the first man came into the region.

Up in Porter County there is one of these highland sites. It was called Tassinong when the first white settler arrived, but sometime in the past there was a forgotten Indian word meaning "raised land" that designated it. It was at the junction of several Indian trails and close to two canoe routes, now called Sandy Hook and Crooked Creek. With the coming of the French, it became known as Tassament Benevole, then Bengual, and Tassamaugh, and Tassinong Grove — and finally it became known by its present name of Tassinong. It was the scene of at least two previous Boundary Wars.

Many years ago, seemingly about the time Columbus was outfitting his ships for his first voyage, two of the housewives of a newly settled neighborhood in Pleasant Township heard from some friendly squaws, who spoke bits of both French and English—that great boundary wars had been fought in and around Tassinong. According to the often repeated tales, two chiefs claimed the area — the grove and the adjacent prairie—and for many years they quarreled over possession.

Finally they each agreed to select three hundred of their best young braves and let them fight it out. At an agreed time the two warring parties met. They fought up and down across the prairie and through the woods. They utilized stratagem and deceit, trickery and open warfare — and at the

end of three days there were only seven warriors left, three on one side and four on the other. The chiefs then learned, too late, that they had sacrificed the flower of their respective tribes, with no victory.

Historians and archeologists think that there were two such boundary battles — one in late 1491 and one during the American Revolution about 1776. These scientists have come to this conclusion because there are skeletons, bones, and weapons deeply buried in the prairie, unearthed by ditch-digging machines, and excavating machines. When submitted to the Carbon 14 test these findings indicate their first date was about 1491, while the bones, skulls, and weapons turned up by the settlers' plows give the date of about 1776. The latter finds include iron and steel weapons, bits of rusted-away swords, hatchets, and guns of the blunderbus or fowling piece type that dates back to about the time of the arrival of the colonists

This ancient village, now only marked by a Historical Monument, was taken over by the incoming settlers in 1833. For a few years there was a postoffice, as well as two stores, a roadside inn and a blacksmith shop and a church — but with the coming of the railroad to a nearby village, Tassinong was abandoned. When the swamp lands were drained, the overflow from the Kankakee no longer reached this area—and today it is some of the region's best agricultural land.

Another settlement famous in Indiana history was one called "Hoosier Nest." Situated a few miles north of the Kankakee at the division between the swamplands and the vast area of grassland called "20 Mile Prairie", it was a log cabin at which travelers could get some sort of accommodation for the night. The cabin had been built by Thomas Snow probably in 1830. It was being rebuilt to provide a "loft room" and a leanto when the three men, Tom Snow and his helpers, Oliver Sheppard and Elias Forbes, decided the newly enlarged structures should have a name. At first they offered various "Inn" names and titles embodying the name "Tavern". But Mr. Snow was reluctant to call his crude log cabin of the Old Sac Trail either an inn or a tavern — for it was neither. It was simply a cross-roads cabin where a traveler could stay overnight. "A place to roost," said Forbes.

"No," objected Sheppard, "a roost signifies discomfort."

"Well," said Forbes, "call it a nest then—a nest for Indians — for Hoosiers."

Thus, it was that this simple log cabin in Section 10 of Union Township, in Porter County, Indiana, was christened "Hoosiers' Nest" and a crudely painted sign was, more or less humorously, nailed over the door. It could be seen from the canoe route and from both the Sac Trail and the River Trail.

There was an Indiana poet, of rustic verse, at Richmond, Indiana, named John Finley, who preceded James Whitcomb Riley in the newspaper columns of the Middle West. He rode into the Kankakee region sometime shortly after the Hoosiers' Nest had been enlarged and wrote a typical frontier poem about the place. It has been printed and reprinted for well over a hundred and twenty-five years:

## THE HOOSIERS' NEST

I'm told, in riding somewhat West,  
A stranger found a 'Hoosiers' Nest:  
In other words, a Buckeye Cabin  
Just big enough to hold Queen Mab in.  
Its situation low, but airy,  
Was on the borders of a prairie;  
And fearing he might be benighted,  
He hailed the house, then he alighted.  
The Hoosier met him at the door,  
Their salutations soon were o'er.  
He took the stranger's horse aside  
And to a sturdy sapling he was tied.  
Then, having stripped the saddle off,  
He fed him in a sugar trough.  
The stranger stooped to enter in  
An entrance fastened with a pin.  
He manifested a strong desire  
To sit down by the log-heap fire,  
'Mid half a dozen 'Hoosieroons'  
With mush and milk, tin cups, and spoons.  
White heads, bare feet and dirty faces  
Seemed much inclined to keep their places  
But mother, anxious to display her sway  
Cuffed the off-spring up to bed and hay.  
Invited shortly to partake  
Of venison, milk and johnny cake  
The stranger made a hearty meal,  
As glances 'round the room he'd steal'.  
One side was lined with divers garments  
The other spread with skins of varmits.  
Dried pumpkins overhead were strung,  
Where venison hams in plenty hung  
Two rifles hung above the door,  
Three dogs lay stretched upon the floor.  
In short, the domicil was rife  
With specimens of Hoosier life.  
The host, who centered his affections  
On game and range and quarter sections  
Discoursed his weary guest for hours  
Till Sommus all-compelling powers  
    Of sublunary cares bereft them  
    —and then I came away and left them.

Mr. Finley left a collection of letters which he had received from various publishers about his poem. "Who was Queen Mab?" was the question most frequently asked.

He replied "She was a famous race horse of the time."

"And the next most frequently asked question was, "What does the word Hoosier mean?"

To that question he answered, "Just as the poem depicts a stranger riding up and hailing the house before dismounting, so the strangers did all through Indiana and nearby states in early days—and from within came the answering query 'Who's there'—and the word Hoosier developed from that invariable answer from within."

## CHAPTER XXV

The Kankakee River is almost a part of Chicago. In the early days it was the southern boundary of Cook County. Its proximity has necessarily made it a part of most of Chicago's expansion program, and its history has always been a part of the Chicago area. Since the establishment of fur buyers in Chicago after the Fort Dearborn Massacre, Kankakee trappers used it as the outlet for their fortunes in peltries. After the trappers departed, the whole Kankakee valley from the city of Kankakee to the city of South Bend, became the hunting and fishing country for all of Chicago's sportsmen, from "Bet-a-Million" Gates to Potter Palmer. Then as agriculture developed, the whole Kankakee Valley sent its produce to Chicago markets.

With the advancement of the Atomic Development projects for peace-time use, the Kankakee has been selected as one of the nation's two first atomic power development areas. An atomic power plant has been authorized for Chicago's Commonwealth Edison Co. The site of the reactor will be at the point where the historic Kankakee enters the Des Plaines River.

The whole Kankakee Valley was formed by glaciers millions of years ago. Now, where the unimaginable powers of the irresistible moving mountains of ice once plowed out the basins that became the great lakes, the equally unimaginable power of the atom will generate and distribute electric power to all of Chicagoland and — far beyond — as new developments make atomic power more managable.

Since a generous water supply is necessary in the atomic power development, scientists are rapidly surveying and determining just how the Kankakee and the Des Plaines Rivers will play their part in this new age. Of one thing they are already convinced: There will be no harm to wildlife or agriculture.

Where the Kankakee meets the Illinois state line, there were until forty or fifty years ago a number of great bayous on the river. Here it was that the Kankakee twisted and turned for dozens of miles seeking an outlet. The drop was so insignificant that the river wandered unchecked, creating many islands which were great, heavily timbered sections of high ground with forests of walnut, oak, elm, and sycamore.

Then came the ruthless lumberman and the need of the settlers to destroy much of those great forests. River steamboats and riverside saw mills came into the picture, and for years, the lumbering establishments took the place of the fur industry. With the coming of the riverman, loggers, and mill hands came the uncouth characters that represented a different but equally picturesque element. Sites that were known to the trappers as Yellow Banks, Hess Slough, Garden of Eden, Indian Gardens, Black Oak, Huyck's Bayou, Ox Bow, and Thayer's Landing, and many others, all the way up to the South Bend country, again became prominent

for the loggers. Places that had for a hundred years or more been the home of fishermen, trappers, and hunters became the sites of logging camps.

Following the loggers came the reclamation promoters who secured state support for the diversion of the crooked river into long straight channels. The draining of age-old lakes caused the death of uncounted thousands of fish, young water fowl, and small water animals.

The natural beauty of the Kankakee, once the most picturesque of rivers, especially that portion that lies between English Lake and Momence, has been created into a straight, ugly ditch. On some recent maps the name of the famed river, which was once called the Teakiki by the Indians until the coming of the Mohicans who called it the Kankakee, appears as The Kankakee Ditch. On the Bellin map of 1743, it was shown prominently as the River du Teakiki. As late as 1814, on the Arrowsmith map, the original name persisted, but on the Choppin map, dated 1834, the name is shown as Kankakee. The site of Hennepins' temporary settlement is designated as "Hennepin."

Early map makers at various times indicated the tribes of Indians that were then in possession of the Kankakee Marsh Lands and the many islands and lakes. First, there were the Miamis, then the Wyandottes, followed by the Illinois, and finally, the Pottawattomies.

Arrowheads, stone axes, awls, drills, mortars, skinning tools, and anchor and ceremonial stones of these various tribes have been collected all along the river for years.

The Beaver Lake country is pretty well identified in the historical writings of the early explorers and priests, as is also the ill-famed Bogus Island. Thus, it is quite likely that LaSalle and his men in 1679 were encamped there. It was about Christmas time in 1679 that LaSalle came down the river enroute to the Mississippi. Hennepin wrote of it as a land of beauty and plenty. After the departure of these explorers came the Jesuit missionaries. A long era of unwritten history, touched only occassionally by the Military in its official reports followed. From 1700 to 1800, the Kankakee was a rendezvous for many warring tribes — first fighting each other and then fighting against the advancement of the white man. Up until the time of the ill fated Battle of Tippecanoe and the Ft. Dearborn Massacre and the Black Hawk uprising, only French courer de bois, living with their Indian wives and brood of half breed children, occupied the valley. Unfortunately, they were not writers.

Kankakee Rapids, Bourbonnais, Manteno, St. George, Momence, Lake Village, Shelby, DeMotte, Hebron, Lowell, Lake Dalecarlia, Thayer, Wilders, English Lake, LaCrosse, San Pierre, Toto, Brems, Davis, and Union Center are the names of modern towns and villages that were originally settled by the venturesome French-Canadians.

The Kankakee Valley has always been the flyway for the migrating birds of North America between the southwest and the northeast. First came the red headed Teal by the hundreds of thousands, then came the mallards, geese, and swan by uncountable thousands. Figures cannot give an adequate

description of the wild fowl that annually occupied the Marshes of the Kankakee. Bever Lake, an expanse of water which covered over forty thousand acres, was often virtually covered with water fowl. Wild birds by the wagon load were hauled into Chicago markets. Swan, weighing from sixteen to twenty one pounds, sold at a dollar each. The other birds were sold at lower prices. Sometimes hunters would skin the swans. Disregarding the excellent meat, they would tack up the beautiful feathered bird skins. When dry they would sell them for their feathers and for the much sought after Swan's Down. The market was frequently better for feathers than for birds. That was in the days when every family had to have two or three featherbeds. The northward movement of the wild fowl over the flyway was within a period of ten days. Always, the southward migration occurred between the days of the 25 and 30 of October. Each great flock of birds had a leader. They came into the swamp area under his leadership. At a given sign, maybe at midnight or midday, in early morning or late evening, he would signal his followers and away they would go for another year.

To the explorers, missionaries, and traders of New France, the Kankakee was a most important river. It was the funnel through which the French-Canadians poured into the Old Northwest.

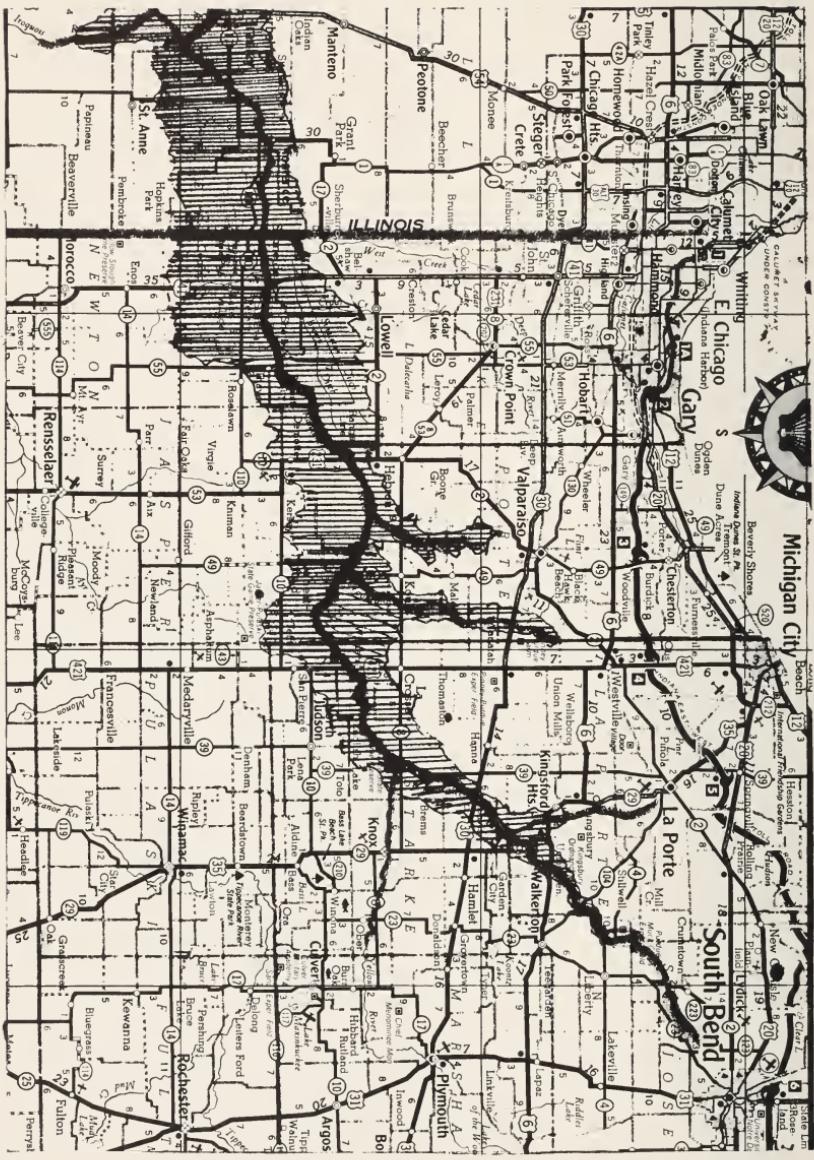
It was the waterway to the Wabash via the Iroquois River. Over its surface the French settler from Canada traveled to Vincennes and St. Louis. It was via the Kankakee that LaSalle and Hennepin journeyed to the Mississippi.

The Kankakee river rises in Indiana near the southern hook of the St. Joseph and empties into the Des Plains at Rock Rapids in Northern Illinois. It permitted the Jesuits and the Franciscans to go to the Mississippi when most travel was necessarily by water. It was the canoe route for untold generations of Indians going north or south. It was truly the home of the last of the Mohicans. It was the always protective hunting ground of all the Algonquin tribes.

Down the Kankakee came a goodly part of the Prophet's followers to their ill-fated Battle of Tippecanoe. Down the Kankakee came the Miamis and the Pottawattomies to join in the Massacre of Ft. Dearborn.

There were thirty large islands in the Kankakee between the Prairie Portage and the natural limestone dam at Momence. These islands were covered with heavy forests, which became the inaccessible hiding places of counterfeitors, highwaymen, horse thieves, and train robbers for half a century.

The Kankakee Valley was the first area of the Old Northwest to be inhabited by white settlers. It is a most historic area described in the Jesuit Relations. It was the mixing bowl of the French Canadians and the Indians, caught between the military forces of four nations and the pioneers of the first Northwest Territory.



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